

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ali Murray is a counsellor, relationship consultant, mentor and professional speaker dedicated to assisting people with their interpersonal relationships. Ali matriculated from Roedean School (South Africa) in Johannesburg and was a Rotary exchange student in Argentina before graduating in public relations and qualifying as a paramedic in 1998.

In 2000 Ali moved into the counselling field, concentrating on relationships and intimacy. She studied through the University of Sydney (Australia), while simultaneously training as a public speaker. She has now been mentoring and counselling individuals and couples – and speaking professionally – for more than 15 years.

Ali works closely with medical and legal professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and attorneys, helping people to achieve and maintain successful relationships. She's also a media favourite and enjoys regular coverage on TV and radio, and in glossy magazines and newspapers.

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IT WAS A warm, lazy Saturday. The late-afternoon winter's sun caressed the back of the couch on which 35-year-old Jinny stretched her long limbs. She was six feet of gregarious, brunette attitude. In her teens she had exhausted a string of boyfriends with her bubbly spirit and relentless energy. She was the kind of girl both men and women gravitated towards. And yet for all her admirers, there was something lonely and aloof about her.

Luke had inherited her brown hair and blue eyes. The chubby eight-year-old lay next to Jinny on the couch watching TV. Skylar, the feisty three-year-old, was having her afternoon nap in her bedroom. They had the house to themselves, with Justin out on a trail run.

Jinny's thoughts wandered to her husband, the way Justin's hands felt as they caressed her body, the way she felt when he was on top of and inside her... He was a handsome man, intelligent, athletic, toned, well hung, and well spoken.

Now 45, his character had grown so much richer over the years of their marriage. There was so much about her Justin that she loved, and yet there were some things about him that she had begun to fear. His moodiness, his constant demands, the angry outbursts... Nothing she did ever seemed good enough. He was cordial in public but he could be so cruel in private. Controlling, critical, and cold, lacking even the most basic empathy. He was an engineer; they liked things meticulous and precise. She just needed to try harder.

Jinny would go out of her way to please him, to do things the way he wanted. In her mid-thirties, she still had her looks. They had never deserted her – even when she'd had Luke and Skylar, she had kept her figure. But she could always be thinner. Justin wished she was sexier, she could tell. If only she could look more intelligent... But lately Jinny seemed to spend more time appeasing rather than pleasing him.

Maybe Justin was having a bad year. But if she was absolutely honest with herself, they'd already had three bad years. But that's marriage. Ten years down the line, and she had more than just her own happiness to think about. The kids' well-being and security had to come first!

And all couples have their problems. Surely things would sort themselves out?

She could take the cruel, snide and unkind comments in front of others that would make her feel small and insignificant. But there was something inside of her starting to boil, something that did not want to appease him any longer. Something inside of her that wanted to break free and to scream from the rooftops, I may not be worth anything to you – but I must be worth something!

JINNY FELT THE cold cement floor beneath her. She felt shaky. She could hear Luke shouting.

“What have you done to my mother? You’ve killed my mother!”

She could feel someone shaking her. As Jinny came to, she saw her son’s little face nose-to-nose with hers, tears rolling down his face. She could hear his high-pitched wailing.

“Mommy! Mommy! What have you done to my mother? You’ve killed my mother!”

Jinny needed to get up, she needed to protect her son, grab her daughter and run! But she felt sluggish, like she was wading through mud. She tried to get up, had to roll over onto all fours, like a dog, and then force herself up into a standing position. She was dizzy; everything was happening in slow motion. She could see Justin sitting on a chair, watching her son and waiting, waiting to slam her into the windowsill again.

Jinny forced herself to move, to move past her husband, to go inside to get Skyla. She wanted to run away, but her fear for her daughter gave her the strength to go back inside.

She screamed to Luke to run and hide, his chubby, little tear-streaked face was pale and frozen with fear. Jinny scooped up the sleeping Skyla and held her tight in her arms and ran. But Justin was at her again, pushing and shaking her, trying to get her to drop Skyla.

“You can leave if you want,” he screamed. “But you’ll never get Skyla! I’ll lie to the courts, if I need to. I’ll tell them you’re a prostitute. You’re not gonna leave. Who do you think you are? You just even try. I’ll make you suffer for a very long time.”

Jinny clung to Skyla. She would be leaving. She would be leaving now! Perhaps he would kill her. But today she would use every atom of strength that she could summon to get away from him. He was not going to get the chance to hurt and frighten the children. She managed to tear herself free from Justin’s hold and ran out of the front door, clutching Skyla and screaming to Luke to run. They emerged from the house like the escapees they were. Justin’s blows still rained down on her as they ran from the house.

Jinny didn’t know where to go or what to do, but she needed to get away. She needed space to think. All she had was her mobile and her children. She ran to the nearest park – to the sanctuary of public view, where he would never dare to beat them. Still, they hid in the bushes, cowering, clinging to each other. He would be coming for them. Through the fog of her groggy mind, Jinny tried to gather her thoughts. She needed time for her head to clear, so she could think. What now?

Jinny needed the children to be quiet. It seemed so hard to think, and her head and face, and her arm were burning.

Jinny felt like she wanted to burst out laughing and sobbing at the same. Hysterical! Everything felt so bizarre. Out of place, out of context, unreal!

How could this be happening to her? How could her husband have assaulted her! Other husbands did this, husbands on TV, husbands in poor, downtrodden areas. Not her educated, well-bred husband! Her Justin.

Skyla was asking questions again.

“Mommy, how long are we going to sit in the bushes?”

“Mommy it’s getting dark.”

“Mommy it’s getting cold.”

“Mommy when are we going to go home?”

The trouble was, Jinny didn’t know, she didn’t know what to do and she didn’t know where to go or who to call. After all, she was a successful therapist. Who was she going to call? People called her when they were in trouble, not the other way around!

She had to try and focus on what to do. Luke took her by the hand.

“Mommy, can’t you phone someone? Maybe someone can come to fetch us. It’s getting cold and dark and your cheek and your face is going a funny colour.”

There are some things in life that you never forget. The birth of your children, the death of a loved one. Your husband’s hands, that were meant to love and protect you, smashing into your face and body until you come crashing down.

Jinny had nowhere to go. She was afraid to call anyone. Protecting her children and keeping them with her seemed more important than telling people she had just been assaulted. Slowly she came to accept that she would have to go home. She couldn’t think straight anyway, and everything was starting to go hazy again. The kids were cold and hungry and maybe Justin had calmed down. Or hopefully gone out.

She stood up. Her body felt cold, sore and stiff, like she had been hit by a car. She tried to be calm as they walked down the street. She told the kids maybe Daddy had gone out. They needed to go home and have some supper. Then they could all go to bed. But they needed to be quiet and good, or else Daddy might get into a bad mood again.

Jinny stood outside the house for several minutes looking for signs of life. Everything seemed peaceful. Maybe Justin was asleep already. Maybe he had calmed down. Maybe he would say he was sorry, that he had not meant to hurt her, that it had all been an accident. That he had lost his temper and that it would not happen again.

Jinny quietly opened the front door, Luke was trembling, clutching her hand, pleading with her, whining, please don’t go back inside. But Jinny had to go back. She had nowhere else to go. The house was quiet; Justin was out. She walked to the kitchen, quickly prepared the kids something to eat and then tucked them into bed.

The bedroom door was locked. She could not get in to get her things – her ID book, her passport, her clothes. A cold chill ran through her body; she knew that he was going to be true to his word. He was going to make things long and hard and difficult for her. For tonight, she would have to snuggle up and sleep with Skyla.
