

Loyalty and conflicted feelings

ALFIE

Mam hates it when I tell her there's no food in the house - it makes her really angry - so I keep quiet and try not to think about my empty belly.

AMY

Mum never fights back when he does this, and if I try to talk to her about it after he's calmed down, when her voice is still raspy and sore, she just pretends it never happened. I think she's too scared of being on her own to tell him how out of order he is being.

To be honest, I have never been the type of girl to put up with things like this. I know you're only supposed to be with people who treat you right, who have respect for you and never cause you any pain or suffering. I suppose I'm just scared of annoying Dean and having to go and live back home with Malcolm.

Sometimes I feel angry at my mum for even letting Malcolm into our lives in the first place. She should have chucked him out the door the first time he ever got that angry look in his eyes, long before he ever laid a finger on her or said anything bad about her. Does she not want to protect her child from him? What was wrong with things just being the two of us? But then I feel awful, because it's not her fault, it's Malcolm's fault.

JAMIE

I told myself that kicking and punching is just the way men settle arguments - it certainly seems that way at school, there's a fight nearly every week

One night, I couldn't ignore the fights for any longer. I thought Brandon would hurt us both so badly that I called the police. When they came round, you could tell they were expecting it to be a Mam and Dad, not Dad and Brandon. I worried that I'd done the wrong thing, that I'd made my Dad seem weak and that Brandon would come back to get me

When I finally realised that he wasn't coming back, I didn't feel happy or relieved, just completely numb, like I couldn't feel anything anymore.

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TED

Just before Kyle was arrested last month, I told a teacher what was going on. The teacher was no help at all. He looked super nervous, shifting back and forth on his feet like a goalkeeper, and kept telling me that my mum should show Kyle who's boss. I wanted to laugh. I wanted to ask that teacher if he'd ever met a 17-year-old boy before, let alone my brother, who could definitely punch his lights out. After that, I totally lost confidence in telling anybody about what Kyle was doing to Mum.

When my brother finally got taken away by the police, I felt like he had passed on some of his anger to me. It was like I'd been holding my breath for ages, and I could finally let it all out. I was really angry at him, and I was really angry at Mum, too, because maybe my teacher was right, maybe she should have been able to stand up to him.

When my Mum's family found out what had been happening, my grandma and grandad and aunts and uncles blamed me for not telling them what was going on. Then I felt angry at them as well. I was basically angry at absolutely everyone.

AVESHA

In my culture, the father is always the head of the house. In many ways it's good, because Dad is always there to protect Mum, Amir and me, but a lot of the time he is far too strict.

I don't have a mobile phone or a tablet, so I can't join in with the group chats that other people in my year have. At first, I just thought all of this was normal, that dads always expect their daughters to be perfect in every way. But as time went on, I realised that this was something more serious. It wasn't about our culture or our religion.