

Someone Stop This Merry-Go-Round; An Alcoholic Family in Crisis Book Excerpt

Suddenly, he grabbed my hair and pulled me down to my knees near the armchair.

"What are you doing?" I screamed trying to get my hair out of his fingers.

He was so close to my face that I could feel his hot, liquor-soaked breath on me. His eyes were bloodshot, and his stale breath turned my stomach.

"Stop, Richie. You don't know what you're doing," I pleaded realizing that he was in a blackout. There was no reasoning with him.

He had a death grip on my hair. It felt like every root came loose from my scalp.

He started to bang my head against the armchair repeatedly. My head felt like it exploded; my stomach churned and I felt nausea well up in my throat. My surroundings became fuzzy. His voice seemed far off, and I was on the verge of passing out. Words couldn't come out of my mouth. I felt like a rag doll being thrown back and forth.

Suddenly, he let go of me and I fell down onto the rug. Instead of waiting for me to lift myself up, he left me there. He turned and went into the bedroom.

I was stunned and unable to move. The pain shot up into my head, and I couldn't function. I was shocked that he physically hurt me so badly. My fear rose, knowing that he was now capable of killing me.

It took me three days before I could get myself off the chair without pain. I knew deep down that I had a concussion. I started hating myself more and more for putting up with his abuse. Still, I couldn't make the decision to leave him.

I must have been insane and weaker than I thought. I was innocently being an abusive mother, letting our children witness all the fights. Years ago, I never would have pictured him turning violent.

His drinking now caused him to go into drunken rages. He looked for excuses, not only to verbally, but also physically abuse me as well. He was always unhappy or angry. Nothing I did pleased him. We weren't together long enough when he wasn't drinking to have a healthy relationship.

Years ago, he swore never to drink like his mother or sister, yet he was on that same road without seeing it, and I did nothing about it. I ignored all the advice from Al-Anon.

He lost the drive to accomplish the things he talked about when we first married. Now all that faced me at night was a sick man who was killing himself. He smelled of liquor every morning when he went to work. I was embarrassed for him knowing he couldn't

hide it from his clients. He lost customers and work dwindled. Richie was no longer a proud man.

About a month later, he came in well after midnight, smashed. I heard him bang against the hall wall as he stumbled. Suddenly, the sheets were pulled off me in one swing. Then with a strong grip, he grabbed the right sleeve to my nightgown in an attempt to lift me.

"Wake up!" he shouted, as he pulled me to the edge of the bed.

Without looking at him, I headed for the couch in front of the large bay window. "I'm going to sleep here tonight, you go to bed."

I didn't look at him as I started to lie down. I felt nauseated from holding back my anger. I wanted him to disappear out of my sight and life.

He came toward me. "I'm going to throw you through the picture window."

As he tried to lift me, everything inside me erupted. Something in me snapped. I hit him full force with my closed fist right between his mouth and nose. I put every ounce of strength I had into the swing. I tried to block out the pain in my hand from the connection with his face.

"You fuckin son of a bitch, you bastard!" I yelled as loud as I could. My fists pounded into his face again and again. I kept repeating vulgar, filthy swear words that I'd never used in my life. "You will never lay another hand on me as long as I live; never, never, never. DO YOU HEAR ME?"

My screams came from deep within me. I wanted to beat him into the ground. The more I hurt him, the more satisfaction it gave me.

He kept stumbling backwards, desperately trying to get away from me. Being drunk, he had no control and moved unsteadily. I continued to pound him. His arms were up trying to protect his face.

His eyes bulged in fear as he fell backwards. I kept swearing, as I attacked him. I went at him like a madwoman. From that moment, he lost control of me and the situation. He wasn't seeing me as a weak, frightened wife anymore.

I watched him become weak and wondered why I waited so many years to stand up to him? Is this all that it took to end this nightmare? A punch in the face was probably too much, but it would have saved us all from living these years of hell.

I realized at that moment that the abuse went on because I allowed it. There's a time to make demands on someone and to refuse to live in any way which is unhealthy. The first time it happened was when I should have kicked him out until he got help, not fourteen years later. My children needed me to give them a safe life, and I didn't. Instead of

protecting Richie, I should have been protecting my children. I used every excuse to stay; I was Catholic or my children needed him. I didn't want anyone to know about his drinking, yet everyone did.

Why was he so blind to what he had become? Didn't he have any guilt about how he was treating us?