Persona- Introduction

My name is Elise.

My mum is a primary school teacher and my dad runs the local post office. I have older sister, Julia, and a younger brother Mark.

I am not tall or short. I have long brown hair that I like to wear in a pony tail, to keep it off my face. My favourite aunt Annette has always told me that I have the most beautiful smile. I know that my best feature are my green eyes- they are large and sparkling, but I do tend to look down a lot, keeping them as a surprise for those I want to impress!

I am a fairly shy person particularly when I don't know someone. Julia was always much cleverer than me, and would sap all the energy around us, with little left over for me. Mark has always been the "apple of Mum's eye". This worked well for me as I was able to take over that more invisible space between them, and feel free to do my own thing!

My favourite thing has always been to read. I can get lost in a different world and find the person I want to become. I have always liked stories where there is a heroine who does amazing things, or someone who overcomes great obstacles.

I was good at school, but careful not to be too good, as I did not want to stand out. Mum was very keen for me to b e a teacher like her, so she steered me in the direction of the basic subjects like English, maths, and history. I was lucky that I was also able to do craft and drama, so that I could continue my love of stories and good overcoming evil! My drama teacher Miss Webb in Year 12 was perhaps the most significant influence on me. She saw something special in me, and encouraged me to act out my inner thoughts and dreams, and take on leading acting as well as production roles. She always said that I should aim high and do what I really wanted!

I did follow my sister and go to university. It just seemed to be expected of me, and I felt powerless to do anything else! I began my teaching degree, which was a breath of fresh air, as I needed to move closer to university to attend my lectures. I shifted into a share house with Julia and some of her friends. I got a job waitressing at a local Italian restaurant, and I felt that my life was really beginning!

Uni was so different. The lecture halls were huge with hundreds of students all in together focusing on the lecturer down the front. I felt very lost until I started to see the same faces sitting around me, and I realised that most others felt just like me. We also had tutes in smaller groups where I could see other girls who appeared friendly and keen to connect with me. We agreed to go for coffee or lunch, and would sit for hours on the lawn talking about everything and anything- our families, our lecturers, essays, assessments, friends, and boys.

I got invited to lots of parties and over time I met many other students and made a small but tight group of friends, who liked to be together. I was so happy, and felt that my life was made!!

Over time, my group got smaller and smaller as my friends found boyfriends and seemed to want to spend most of their time with them. They told me that they still saw me as their very good friend, but their boyfriends said it was a drag having a single girl around, and made it harder to do “couple things”. I so much wanted to have my own boyfriend. I would go to parties and look around for potential partners, but was not sure how to manage the situation.

That was when I met Ken. It was at a party, and he seemed surrounded by girls. I initially paid him no attention, as he was surrounded by other girls and I could see that he would not find me interesting. Then to my absolute surprise, he was at my side. He told me that his friend Paddy was currently going out with my good friend Liz, and Paddy had suggested he check me out! I asked about all the other girls that had been with him, and he scoffed, saying that he was not interested in them!

Ken was very tall, and towered over me. He was very broad, and strong, and had chiselled features, a broad mouth, and amazing brown eyes. I could not believe that he had chosen to single me out, and that he wanted to spend the evening with me. I made up my mind at that moment that he was the one! He was going to be my boyfriend!!

Story

I am lying on the bed in the honeymoon suite at the # resort in # on Bali. My whole body feels sore and stiff and I do not want to move. I turn my head to the side and wince as I see my face reflected in the mirror. There is lipstick smudged all around my mouth and chin, and mascara fanning out under my eyes. My tears are silent but steadily pouring down my cheeks. My eyes cannot look away from the large purple bruise that is forming down my face from the left cheek bone. I try to use my arm to move my hair away from my face, but the pain is intense and shoots down my neck to my shoulder and arm. I feel frozen in time, and cannot understand how I got here! How did this happen to me?

I awake some hours later and need to use the bathroom. I drag myself painfully to the bathroom, use the toilet and turn on the bath. I wait patiently for it to slowly fill, then I lock the door and slide in. It does not matter what I do my body is screaming at me “No”!

I think back at how happy I was only a few days before- I was convinced that this was the happiest day of my life! My prince, my knight in shining armour, had asked me to spend the rest of my life with him, and we had been married in fairytale fashion. The church, the reception, the bridesmaids, the flowers, the dress, the photos, the guests- feeling at last that I was doing something really significant, and I was now a real grown up!!

How did this happen- how did I not see it?

Ken was so polite and considerate before the wedding. Even when I stayed over and we went on holidays together, he had seemed the perfect gentleman! He would open the door for me, ask for my input about restaurants or activities, he seemed so respectful!

The first sign of shifting sands was when we arrived at the resort, and he said that he was going out for a while. I thought this was strange on our first night here, but I put it down to him having to process the stress of the last few days with all the arrangements for the wedding. He came home in the early hours of the morning reeking of alcohol. I told myself this was understandable.

The next morning we agreed to go to the pool to relax and catch some sun. I had a surprise for Ken, as I had purchased a new bikini that he had admired on a recent trip to Queensland. I was so excited for him see it and realize that I had gone out of my way to buy something that he liked so much. When he saw what I was wearing, it was like a switch inside him went off. He grabbed my arm and yanked me all the way from the pool back to our room. He began yelling at me, that no wife of his was going to wear such an outfit and look like such a slut. I was so stunned that I could not say anything. I had never seen him so angry and out of control, and was not sure how to deal with it. I decided that it was my fault, I must have misinterpreted what he had said about the swimsuit when we were in Queensland. I was so disappointed that I had upset him so much on our honeymoon!

I changed my outfit and returned to the poolside. Ken acted like the incident had never taken place. I thought this odd, but it was also a relief as it put off having to have a conversation and admit how I had upset him so much. I went along with this script.

We stayed outside enjoying the pool setting for most of the day. Ken spent a lot of time on his phone, stepping away when he needed to make a call. I took a lot of photos to share with family and friends so that I could show them our wonderful location and what a good time we were having. At one stage Ken returned from a phone call and grabbed my phone out of my hand. He began to read my messages and look at my posts with a very disapproving look on his face. I asked him as nicely and politely as I could to give me phone back, to which he responded by throwing it in the pool! I laughed as I thought this must be some type of joke, but he put his face very close to mine, and said through gritted teeth “Do not think you can do anything now that you are my wife without getting my sayso”. The pool attendant rescued my phone and returned it to me very apologetically, implying that in some way this must have been his fault. Once again I thought that without meaning to, something I had done must have upset him. I would need to keep a close eye on what the triggers might be.

We were booked in to the top restaurant for dinner that night. I was determined that I would move things to a better footing. I chose my dress very carefully, and used only the jewellery and makeup that he had given me and I was sure that he liked. I resolved that I would be as agreeable as possible. I knew that I could play this part. I had to live through the next week, and then work out what this means for me and for us.

We both walked into the restaurant and I could sense everyone turning to look. We were such a striking couple. Ken with his rugged looks, and towering presence. Me with my

sparking green eyes, my petite figure, and my hair piled up on my head. My long gold dress was stunning.

The waiter seated us with a beautiful view over the moonlit beach, and we had the best night together. Ken was happy and relaxed, laughed, spoke of his dreams for our future life, the family we would have and all the things we would do. I began to think that perhaps I had imagined things, and that I had been unfair towards him. Ken ordered the best champagne, and a sumptuous feast, and I believed in that moment that we were destined to have a wonderful life together.

When the meal was over, Ken said that he had some things to do, and that he would meet me back at the room some time later. I returned to our suite and carefully undressed and took out the lingerie that he had given me for my birthday. I turned back the sheets and waited for him. It was well after midnight when I gave up and fell asleep.

I was awoken with a jolt as I felt Ken's heavy body on top of me and his breath reeking of alcohol consuming me. I tried to push him off but he grabbed my wrists and pinned me to the bed and said "oh no you don't" and slapped me very hard across my cheekbone. I struggled and squirmed and said over and over, "Ken, this is not right, this is not the way it should be, this is not what I want". But he seemed unable to unwilling to hear me, and eventually I realised that I just had to give up and to save myself, let him do what he wanted!

I must have passed out. I woke up on the bed in daylight alone.

Coercive and controlling family violence is where someone uses a pattern of behaviour over a period of time to put pressure on another to do something that they do not want to do or would not choose to do. This is totally inappropriate and unacceptable.