



I can't remember when it started.

This post was sent to us anonymously, via email. The writer added a note that she felt able to share this piece after reading one that we hosted earlier this week, discussing [domestic abuse in a lesbian relationship](#). The relationship discussed in the post has now ended, and the writer is recovering.

Last week I stood in the middle of the frozen food aisle of my local supermarket, shopping for chips. Banale, huh? The stuff of housewifely tedium?

If only.

You see, I love to shop. I am one of those dreadful women whose thoughts, as the lottery numbers spin each week, turn to how the first £10,000 would go on an orgy of clothes and shoes and STUFF. Planning how I'd hit Oxford St, preferably with BFF in tow.

After that, the serious things. Children, home, and a few charities very dear to my heart. But I deserve some frivolity – and I deserve to fritter that first tranche of my newly-won millions on myself.

I like food shopping, too. I'm not exactly a feeder: but I like to buy for others. Would my son like this or that tidbit? Would this go down well with my daughter? Can I shine in the kitchen tonight?

How shallow. How superficial. How lovely, though, just to potter and plan and organise my life around the people I love.

So of course, I buy chips. Just like everyone else. What the rest of you didn't do this week – at least, I hope you didn't – is freeze. I think I let out a slight moan. At least, someone did: and as there was no-one else around, it probably was me. I trembled.

Because last time round, I bought the WRONG chips.

Big deal. No-one's going to hit me for that mistake. They probably won't even shout. They'll just tell me off. Again. And I won't say anything, because I don't want the argument: the aggro.

Only, each time, now, they tell me this stuff, it chips away (sorry!) at something inside. I buy the wrong chips, the wrong fish, the wrong food. I don't put the right amount of sugar in the tea. And when I make it, its too strong. Too weak.

I don't butter bread right. I put on too much jam. I don't wash, iron, cook, clean, anything right.

I can't remember when it started. Little things, obviously. Stuff I laughed at when they, my other half, said it. Then it started to get irritating. And then, because their whole demeanour is a masterwork of passive aggressivity, switching at the drop of a hat from sweet lightness to



shouting that makes me shrivel and curl up inside and want to go into a corner and never come out, it started to get to me.

Why? Its only words. I'm a strong person. Really strong. So I just carry on, right? Let it wash over me, like I've let so much else in my life. I'll get past it.

Only, somewhere, sometime, it stopped washing over: started to seep inside. I didn't notice at first, apart from the fact that I felt that bit more jittery, nervous. Then, sometimes, I'd just burst into tears and cry for no good reason: the shouting got worse, or it felt like it did. More and more, it was getting to me where it hurt. I'm crap. Crap at everything.

That has to be true, right? Because nothing I do is right. I don't know when we crossed the line, from me coping, to me not coping. I only know I was a long way past the line before I realised that strong, reliable, coping me had begun to dissolve: just about presentable in public; held together by hope and sticking plaster behind the façade.

I could be better, I think, if I only had the time – because I do far too much. But as I sink further into this, doing stuff, even the smallest stuff, becomes difficult beyond words. Recently, the poison has even begun to spread to my work and I am beginning to get frightened as to when people will notice.

I know all the labels. Please don't add your own "helpful" ones to the pile I've amassed already.

This is abuse. I know. So get out? Sorry: it REALLY isn't that easy, for reasons you couldn't even begin to guess (though there is hope on the distant horizon). I'm become depressed. No shit, Sherlock! Of course I am. Withdrawn? Yep. I'm starting to turn away friends because I can't face them. I AM talking to Women's Aid: so far, they've been brilliant

And over all, that dreadful, stupid butterflies-in-tummy fearfulness and me wondering WHY? I'm a grown woman and no-one is hitting me so to be reduced to this level because of words: what sort of weak, self-centred person must I be?

There will be, my friends tell me, a time when this is over, and I will look back and breathe easily once more. Right now, I can't see it. Everything around me is bleak: I dread the least domestic interaction.

Last week, I held it together once more. I bought some chips. The right ones, this time. Apparently. I went back to my car. And I sat and howled my eyes out.

This isn't me. I know it isn't. Not really.

But it gets harder and harder to believe different.



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