

Jillian's life falls apart. Her husband has hit her for the last time after her son shoves her. She's not going to let the cycle continue. She moves in with her parents. Soon fires start everywhere. What is happening?

Back to Square One

By Jackie Adams

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BACK TO SQUARE ONE

JACKIE ADAMS

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Chapter 1

If the tension was building I didn't have a clue! Normally I can control his emotions by being a step ahead, and you know what? Sometimes I can then there are other times I can't. This day in particular ended up one of the I cannot days.

I realize I have to plead before he grasps me in his giant hands again. I can't take this anymore. I can feel my eyes are swollen probably to black and blue. I can taste the blood from my lips. I can feel my body is bruised. As I crawl, I doubt I'm going to make it through another night. I tucker down in a corner as his shadow overwhelms my hemisphere. "No, no, no more." I practically whisper not sure where my strong voice went. Could it be worse? I beg and plead not to have another release of his physical body's stampeding on me.

He pushes me to the ground and sprawls himself on top of me. He reaches in his pocket and jerks out a pack of cigarettes. As he pries open my mouth with his hand he uses his other hand to shove three, four cigarettes at a time in my mouth. He grunts, "Have you something to say now?"

It takes everything I have to push him off of me. I spit out as much of the tobacco as I can, "I'm sor... sorr... sorry, honey." I slowly try standing. I feel so broken.

He says under his breath as if relinquishing it is so damn hard, "And what are you sorry for?"

My eyes swipe across the room quickly. I know they're bloodshot from his punches. I can barely see. I spit out more broken cigarettes, "I'm sorry for everything, honey. I haven't

been the best of wives. If I could just get it right!" I'm not really sure what I'm apologizing for, so it makes more sense to cover every topic one of which he could be thinking of right now.

He backs away. Which means this time I have succeeded. My shoulders are hunched over my entire neck. "If I could just get things right."

He leaves the room and slams the bedroom door so hard the picture on the wall falls breaking the glass in the frame. I lean my shattered, tired body against the wall. I feel so damn weak.

My mind is going back to the very first time he hit me and had me crying. He said, "You sound like a baby." I've come a long way you know. I actually, on occasion, stand up for myself now. Not very often, but it does happen. I learned when I had defended myself that the beatings became worse, though.

You see he's the one with the career, the house, and the friends. I'm just somebody in the background of it all. If only I could be smarter and wiser I could be like the rest of the ladies in our friend group! They seem so happy and they never have on heavy make up like me. This gives me hope. I decide I can be better; I can be good like them. I'm doing something wrong. I think of all the ways I can strengthen what I've failed.

I'm older now. I have to wonder if anyone would see past the backaches, the age, the scars, the brokenness, and everything else that comes with it. Where would I go? Seems like a lot. Doesn't this typically happen to the younger generations? How embarrassing at my age!

Of course, it was embarrassing when he had an affair with the girl that was a decade younger than him. Rather typical these days, if not younger?! I hang my head low realizing just how much of a catastrophe this all is.

I know a lot of people wonder why I don't just leave him. It's now always bad. How would you feel if you were in a routine you knew well and were familiar with and one day it got out of hand with a bully? A bully who used to be your best friend. You get paid well. You love your job. But there's this one person making it absolutely miserable for you now. You have bills that need to be paid. Can you wait the two weeks to get your pay at your new job if you leave? I mean so many questions. It's easy to say but so damn hard to do. Not to mention, his Jekyll and Hyde, one I love and one I hate. I know I need to leave. It's all very overwhelming. My feet feel so heavy as I walk to the bathroom.

I look in the mirror and realize I look scary. I look like a horror flick movie villain. He made me uglier than he says I already am. I trace the bruises on my face. If a little kid saw me the kid would cry! I have a lady's lunch tomorrow, but with my face looking like this I won't be able to attend. I bend down to the sink and splatter some water in my mouth. I'm thirsty, but I don't want to go in the kitchen. I'd only disturb his madness again.

I don't want him to wake up Lewis. Lewis is turning twelve years old Thursday. I touch my face. How can I throw him a birthday party with my face looking like this? No make-up can cover these cuts. My fingers trail down to my sore ribs. I promised him a birthday party this year, but we're not going to be able to do it. He's going to be disappointed.

Really I should have been a mom to three but the beatings took place. As a result, I lost two children. How Lewis survived is beyond me! It wasn't because Ray stopped hurting me. He says I like it when he causes me pain. He says I like playing the victim. It couldn't be further from the truth. All I want is his love. I wrap my world around Ray and Lewis.

I must have fallen asleep. When I wake up my face is sore. It feels smashed in. I go to the bathroom and see what of the mess I can clean up. Once I get the dry blood off it's not as bad as I thought it was going to be. I trace my greenish bruises under my eyes. I finish cleaning up the bloody cut on my lips and nose. I walk back to the bedroom checking the clock. Lewis has school today. I need to make him breakfast.

I wear my hair down. Most of it covers my face. A look I've grown accustomed to. I wake Lewis up with a kiss on his forehead. "Come on baby. You have to get up and get dressed. I'll make you some breakfast. Do you want eggs or pancakes?"

He turns his body to face me, "Ah mom. I'm tired. Can't I sleep just a little longer?"

I trace my fingers through locks of his hair. "Come on. You have to get up now. While you get dressed I'll make you something to eat."

I give him a kiss on top of his head and make my way to the kitchen. I see Ray is sleeping on the couch. He's snoring as loud as usual. How he can cause me so much pain and sleep so soundly is beyond me.

I start the honey, maple bacon. I love the way it makes our home smell. As I crack the eggs Lewis comes walking in. I ask him, “Did you brush your hair? You know you can’t wear that ball cap during class.”

He runs his fingers through his locks, “Yes, I brushed my hair.” He then puts his cap back on.

I sit the plate in front of him. “I made a lot of eggs and bacon today. I hope you’re hungry.”

He looks down at his eggs then back up at me, “Can we have my birthday party this weekend?”

I trace my cheek. “No, honey. I fell getting out of the shower last night. I messed up my face pretty bad. I wouldn’t want your friends and their moms to see me like this.”

Lewis throws his plate across the room and it shatters against the hardwood floor, “But you promised!” He stands up and uses all his body weight to push into me forcing me across the dining room where my back hits the kitchen counter. “You promised!” He yells with tears streaming down his face.

Ray wakes up and turns to face us, “You know your mother is always making promises she can’t live up to.”

Lewis throws his arms around me and says, “I’m so sorry, mom. I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

Still in shock I put my finger on his chin lifting his face so I can see his eyes, “You didn’t hurt me baby. I’ll be fine.” The truth is I can feel the pain in my back and know it’ll leave a

mark. I won't be able to differentiate it from the bruises Ray gave me last night, though.

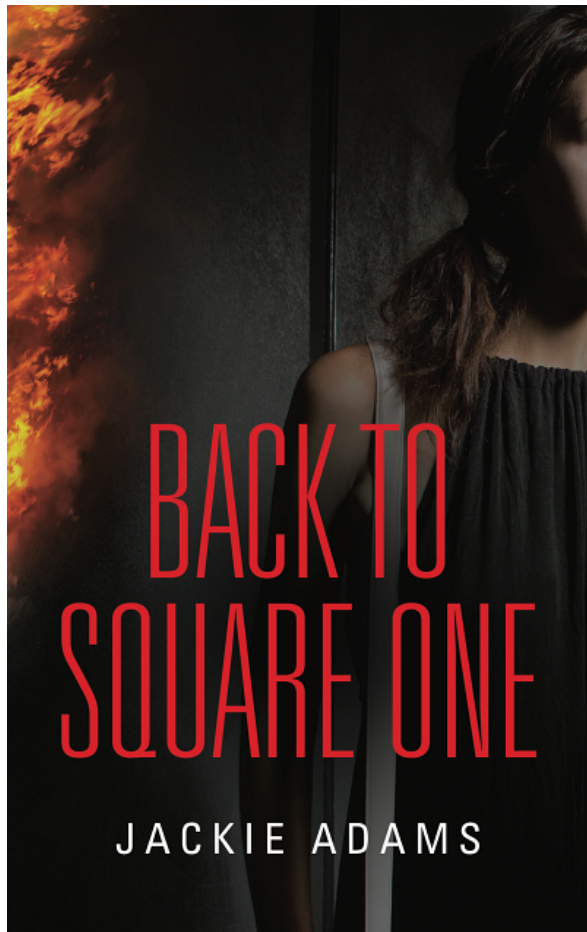
Ray laughs, "Come on, kid. I'll give you a ride to school." He walks into the bedroom to change his clothes.

I ask Lewis, "Did you finish your homework last night?"

He replies, "Yes mom."

I tell him, "Grab your backpack and be ready for when your dad comes in."

My heart is aching so bad. It's the first time that Lewis has lashed out at me. I knew he'd be upset, but I never expected him to hurt me. I look to the floor and back at him. I study him for a moment wondering if he's seen his dad beat me more than I realize. I try to suck up my tears, so he doesn't hear me crying. Sometimes Ray hits me so hard it makes it hard to conceal. Maybe Lewis heard us. Maybe he thinks it's normal to retaliate against his mother? No, if that was the case he wouldn't have been crying and saying sorry.



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