

## You Chose Option B...

Alex gives you cash each week when he drops you off to buy groceries. He used to look over the receipts really closely, but he hasn't done that in a few months. You start buying cheaper brands and hide \$20-50 a week in the pocket of some jeans in your dresser. At this rate, it will take you a year to save enough money for a flight home, you hope Alex doesn't catch on in the meantime.

A few months go by and Alex starts hitting you when he gets angry, but the thought of being able to escape soon makes the pain subside. You wonder what you will tell your family and if they will ever accept you again. Sometimes you daydream about what's worse – feeling isolated with Alex or the potential of being shamed and dismissed further by your family and friends when you arrive back in Argentina.

One day when you get back to the house after buying groceries, Alex asks you if there's anything you'd like to share with him. You're not sure how to respond, so you nod your head, 'no.' He takes cash out of his pocket and throws it at your feet, you assume it's the money you'd been hiding. Without further warning, he pushes you against the wall and starts strangling you until you lose consciousness. When you come to, you feel shaken and your memory is a bit fuzzy but the tenderness in your neck helps you recall what happened. You contemplate how you can mend things until you can escape, but before you get the chance, your neck swells up and you have trouble breathing. You're terrified of Alex's reaction if you leave to seek medical treatment, and either way, you're fearful that you'll be deported if you go to a doctor because of what Alex said. Instead, you put some ice on your neck, hoping it will reduce the swelling. In the next couple of weeks, you experience severe headaches, depression and muscle spasms and are concerned from what you've read online that these effects will be permanent.

## A Follow Up from Emerge:

Over 1.5 million women are strangled each year, most of them at home by their partner. This form of abuse is used as a fear tactic because generally, the attacker's intent is to scare their victim into believing they're capable of murder, which creates extreme terror for survivors. The fear is not unwarranted, as strangulation attempts are a precursor for more lethal behavior. Studies show that women who survive strangulation by their partner are seven times more likely to be the victim of an attempted homicide, and eight times more likely to be a victim of a homicide (Journal of Emergency Medicine).

The effects are serious, and can include long term psychological effects, including brain injury and paralysis. They don't always show up right away, though, which is likely part of the reason why only about 10% of survivors seek medical attention. This is incredibly dangerous, considering that some victim's experience fracturing and swelling in their throat that can cause death up to 36 hours after the incident occurred. Anyone who's been strangled should seek immediate medical attention whenever possible, even if there are no obvious symptoms.

Even though Isabella had a long term plan of how to get away, creating a safety plan for the rest of her stay with Alex may have saved her life. A survivor's safety is most at risk when leaving an abusive relationship, so it's critical that they carefully plan out how to stay safe during the next episode of abuse (if it occurs), the steps to take in order to leave and how to stay safe once she has left.



Emerge!'s 24/7 bilingual crisis hotline is a way survivors can get help developing their own safety plan. Hotline staff are available to provide support and options related to the caller's goals, including helping them find the safest way to leave the relationship if that's what they are wanting to do. They can also serve as a support system by connecting callers to Emerge! services and community resources. Unfortunately, Isabella likely didn't know that resources were available to her for help with creating a safety plan, which caused a barrier to Isabella getting the help she needed.

**[Click here to see what would have happened if you would have chosen to call your sister.](#)**