A friend of mine, I’ll call her “Kay,” was in a relationship with a man who didn’t keep any of his promises. After months out of work, “Jay” found a temporary job, but instead of repaying his share of the rent. He spent his earnings on himself…and on another woman! Kay asked him to leave, but he refused. She moved out, putting all of her furniture and other belongings in storage. Jay left town. After several months, Kay moved back into that house.

That’s when Jay returned, and serious abuse began.

Jay began calling her, threatening revenge. One night, someone shot and wounded Kay. She survived, sure the shooter was Jay, but she had no proof. She hadn’t seen him and couldn’t find witnesses.

Another time, Kay arrived home and found Jay waiting by her door. He calmly said he missed her and pleaded for a drink of water. She felt sorry for him and relented. The minute Jay got into the house, he began beating her with a table leg. She called the police, but he escaped. No witnesses.

Jay’s angry phone calls escalated, threatening her daughters and grandchildren and even her former employers. Kay was terrified. The police did not have enough evidence to arrest Jay. “They’re not going to do anything until I’m dead!” she cried.

Kay needed an ally, and as her friend I took on that role. Mostly, I listened to her and tried to calm her down. Kay’s anxiety led her to drink more and more. At my urging, she started going to AA meetings. We counted her hours, then days of sobriety. She was so proud of herself!

At my suggestion, Kay obtained a restraining order, but each time she returned to the courthouse to renew it, she learned that Jay had still not been served the order.

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I researched and passed on to Kay the secret address of a shelter where she could take refuge. Kay found more than a safe bed there; she also participated in group therapy. Hearing the stories of other abused women helped her feel less alone.

Eventually, Jay made the mistake of attacking Kay in my backyard. I called the police, and they caught him the next day. My husband and I testified in court as witnesses. Thanks to an assistant district attorney’s carefully prepared prosecution, Jay was convicted of attempted second-degree murder and other charges and will serve many years in prison.

Monica Bradsher