

'THE SECRET I WISH HE'D SHARED'

You know your man inside out – but there's one important topic that's often shrouded in secrecy even among the closest couples...

"I needed to pinch myself sometimes to check my life was real," says Aby King. Aby had it all. Her fiancé Mark was successful and popular, and he adored her. They'd met on a blind date in 2005, and Aby was smitten. "I fell for his energy and drive, and I loved the fact that Mark liked to take care of me," she says. It wasn't long before they were planning their dream wedding. "I could hardly believe it was all happening to me," says Aby.

Mark had made loads of money from the property boom, buying flats in London, doing them up and selling them on. Business was so good that Aby took a break from her career as a letting agent to renovate a house in south London.

"It doesn't sound very independent but I was happy," says Aby, 32. "My friends thought I was really lucky, and they loved Mark. My mum had died of leukaemia when I was 14 and for years I'd been feeling lost. I liked the feeling of someone looking after me. I know Mark was proud of the fact that I didn't have to work, too. Sometimes I'd ask him about money and he'd clam up, but lots of men do that. I wasn't into shopping or buying this season's designer handbag, so we never really had any issues of that sort."

But as the wedding grew closer, Aby began to realise that everything wasn't as perfect as it seemed. One day she came

across a bank statement for their joint account. "I saw it was a couple of hundred pounds overdrawn, and thought, 'That's odd,' so I showed it to Mark. He looked really uncomfortable and snatched it from me. He told me it was a mistake and that I didn't need to worry about it."

Aby forgot about it but by early 2008, just a few months later, Mark's business seemed to be struggling. "I tried to talk to

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him but he wouldn't discuss it. I knew things were bad though, so I went to an agency and found myself a good job as a letting agent in the City. But when he found out about it, he got really upset and said I didn't need to. I thought that maybe things weren't as desperate as I'd imagined, so I turned the job down."

In fact, Mark's debts were mounting and, as the weeks passed, he started showing the classic signs of depression. He stopped

going to work every day, struggled to get out of bed and seemed to lose interest in the wedding and the house they were renovating. "I kept trying to tell him money didn't matter, that we'd get through it," says Aby. "I told him to look forward to the wedding. But Mark had become like a shadow, curled up under the duvet all day."

One spring afternoon, five weeks before their wedding date, Aby left Mark at home watching TV and went out to meet friends. When she rang his phone later, there was no answer. "I knew something was wrong straightaway," Aby says. "I called his office but he hadn't been in. I rang all our friends, nobody had seen him. Finally I rang the police and reported him missing – but it had only been a few hours, so there was nothing they could do. I just had this horrible feeling something had happened."

At 1am, Aby opened the door to a police officer. "He told me a man's body had been

