

'My ex tried to ruin my life – now I want to help other survivors'

After beginning a relationship with an old friend, Holly Whitmore found out what her ex was capable of...

When Holly Whitmore reunited with former pal Akim Nicholson in 2019, their friendship blossomed into a romance.

But just weeks into their relationship he was arrested for breaking into his mum's house, and shocked Holly knew she had to end things.

But shockingly, in December 2023, Akim posted a video of him and Holly being intimate across his social media channels. Holly says, 'I watched in horror as my privacy was stripped away in front of me.'

After contacting the police, 35-year-old Akim Nicholson was arrested and later found guilty of disclosing a private sexual film before being sentenced to four years.

Holly has now come to terms with what happened to her and is using her experience to help others. She says, 'I won't let him have the final say, so now I'm using my voice to help others, as I've recently set up a charity to support victims of domestic violence and revenge porn.'

In 2019, mum of two Holly was having issues with an ex boyfriend who wouldn't

leave her alone. She says, 'I was vulnerable and a shoulder to lean on came in the form of Akim, a friend I'd known since I was a teenager. He messaged me out of the blue on Snapchat and we got talking. I confided in him about what I was going through, and when we met up, he listened to me. He felt like an escape from the chaos.'

VULNERABLE

The pair got closer and by May 2022, the feelings of friendship developed into a romantic relationship. Holly says, 'I couldn't have been happier. He came into my life at the right time. We got on so well and he was so romantic with me. He'd take me out for lovely meals and he even surprised me with a shirt that said 'soulmate' with my face on it. It was lovely.'

But soon, cracks started to show. Within just weeks of becoming a couple, Holly noticed a change in Akim. 'He constantly asked me where I was and who I was with,' she says. 'I felt suffocated, and when he talked about our future, it all seemed too quick.'

Then one day, Akim called Holly and said he was in



Akim and Holly had a brief relationship before he turned nasty

Holly hopes to help other victims of revenge porn



‘IF I CAN TURN MY EXPERIENCE INTO SOMETHING POSITIVE, THEN MAYBE I CAN HELP SOMEONE ELSE RECLAIM THEIR LIFE’

trouble. 'He said he'd been arrested but he skirted around what he'd done,' she says.

But then Holly found out he'd been arrested for breaking into his mum's house and horrified, she immediately changed the locks on her house. She says, 'He'd filmed himself trashing her house in a rampage, smashing up furniture and splashing bleach around. I was stunned.'

Akim was arrested and put on trial, where he was found guilty

of burglary, criminal damage and sending an offensive message. He was sentenced to two years and nine months in prison. Holly says, 'I couldn't believe I trusted him. He was too volatile, and I knew I had to end it. I didn't want him anywhere near me or my girls.'

In June 2022, Holly explained via email that it was best they no longer saw each other before she blocked him. She says, 'I felt instant relief and my confidence returned.'

But when Akim was released from prison in August 2023, he made it clear to Holly that he wanted to be back in her life. She says, 'I knew better though. I was stronger and refused to get back with him. But that's when the nightmare started.'

Akim bombarded Holly with emails and called her obsessively. Then, just a few days before Christmas 2023, Holly's phone buzzed. When she checked the notification, it was an email from Akim that simply read: 'Check your Snapchat'. She says, 'What I saw made my blood run cold. I was an intimate video of us from when we'd been together. He'd recorded me without my consent. I was horrified.'

BOMBARDED

Akim had also tagged her in the video and encouraged others to share it. Holly says, 'Once he saw that I'd viewed it, he messaged me again and said: 'You're finished. Your whole year just got ruined'. I felt so lightheaded I could barely breathe.'

Akim had shared it on TikTok and WhatsApp, reaching tens of thousands of people. Holly immediately reported the video to the police and gave a statement before they put out an arrest warrant for Akim. Holly says, 'A million horrifying thoughts flashed through my mind. I was scared that my two girls would see it. At 14 and 16, they were always on social media. I took their phones away for a bit and explained what happened. It was horrific but they needed to know the truth.'

Then Holly told her mum. She says, 'I was in tears, but she was so supportive, as were the rest of my friends and family, I wanted to move away and change jobs, but I knew I hadn't done anything wrong.'

The police kept Holly updated on their search as Akim had gone on the run. But in mid-January 2024, police finally caught up with him following a six-hour standoff on top of a Birmingham pub.

'Akim punched an officer, threatened the police with a knife, and even threw bricks



Akim was arrested in January 2024

and a fire extinguisher at officers before finally being arrested,' Holly recalls.

In October 2024, Akim Nicholson, 35, was sentenced to four years in prison. He was charged with disclosing a private sexual film, along with assaulting an emergency worker and criminal damage.

'While part of me felt a sense of relief knowing he was behind bars, it wasn't enough. No sentence can truly undo what he did to me,' Holly says.

THREATENED

Holly has been diagnosed with PTSD, struggles with anxiety, and has restless nights. She says, 'I've come to realise that the shame isn't mine to carry – it's his. What Akim did to me was a gross violation of trust and privacy. He wanted to break me, to make me feel powerless, and for a while, it worked. But I won't let him have the final say,' she says.

Now Holly is using her voice to help others. She says, 'I'm starting a charity to support victims of revenge porn, to let them know that they're not alone and that the shame isn't theirs. I want people to understand that the perpetrators are the ones who should be shamed, not the victims. No one should suffer in silence or hide. If I can turn my experience into something positive, then maybe I can help someone else reclaim their life.'

● To find out more about the work Holly does, visit powerwithoutlimits.co.uk. Holly has waived her right to anonymity