

The Nightmare

I wake to blackness... crouched in the corner hiding, hugging my knees, chills run down my legs. I can't move. The cement floor is damp and cold, and humidity hangs heavy in the musky air. My eyes adjust and I can make out the remnants of ripped curtains and a dark empty room. I can't move. I can hear him coming towards me. I know he's there, he's always there and I don't dare move. My breath slow and heavy, my chest pounding, I am frozen. Sweat trickles down my back. The blade of a knife catches a small stream of light from a crack in the ripped curtains. I know he's there. I know what's coming. My throat constricts. I can't breathe. I close my eyes. I can't move. He is closer. A figure with no face, no recognizable features, but I know him. He laughs and calls to me, taunting me. He will hurt me. He enjoys hurting me. My body trembles. My mind reels. I want to run. I can't. There is nowhere to go. There will be blood. There will be pain. There will be so much pain. I don't move. Outside the walls there is nothing, nothing to save me. I am trapped here. My body trembles. I will fight, but I am nothing, and I am tired, so tired. He will win. I have nothing. The figure moves across the room stalking me, savoring the power that he has and the smell of fear that fills the room. I want to run. I can't run there is nowhere to go. I am scared but I will fight. I know I will fight. I have to fight, but my body will not move and I am so tired. He lunges at me and I lurch up and run. Now there is color in the colorless room as a red stream spills from my arm. There is blood, so much blood and there is pain... so much pain. Every corner of the room is dark, the walls black, there is no door and I cannot get out. I feel him closer and I run. He is on me his faceless face in front of mine. His fist slams into my jaw... I am nothing. His hot breath on me... unimaginable vulgarities slice through my ears and my heart... I am less than nothing. There is pain, so much pain. I can't scream, I can't run. No one will hear me. No one will care. No one will help. I am so scared. I am so alone. I am trapped here. I will die here. I am dying here. He is the predator. I am his prey. I am his property...
I am his wife.

This nightmare is reality for more women than you can possibly fathom. Your mother, aunt, cousin, teacher, neighbor, best friend or daughter either have experienced domestic abuse at the hands of someone who claimed to love them or they know someone who has. This is a deliberate act preformed by a cowardly man or woman, in some cases, who feels that physical or mental abuse gives them the upper hand in a relationship. They thrive on the power that they derive from the abuse and are addicted to the rush. Inflicting more thoroughly each blow with the aim of a skilled sniper until they derive no pleasure from this particular form of abuse and move on to something more thrilling. There's a systematic pattern and many ways of breaking a person down and this particular type of individual will explore them all if allowed, and more often than not they have free reign to do so. It isn't because these women are the spineless, weak examples of their species that they are portrayed to be. It is common knowledge that the majority of our society feels that, "they deserve it because if they were smart they would get out." This is the sad misconception that our society is breeding under. On the contrary, before the abuse, most often these women were strong spirited, attractive and ambitious,

the challenging kind, because if it didn't require some calculation the abuser would derive no pleasure from breaking them down. Well you say, if they were so strong and intelligent how could they fall prey to such behavior and why do they stay? The typical abuser is often the most unassuming, a cleverly disguised charismatic character who wins his victim or victims (lets not rob him of his trophies) over with his guiles. He is a leader in his community, a powerful man, a quiet bookish type, an athlete, a police officer, a lawyer, a contractor, a politician, a business owner, a janitor, a teacher... you get the picture. He's your neighbor, your boss, your workout buddy, a guy you see at the coffee shop and genuinely like, a good guy, funny with admirable qualities. He is the person that showed up on the first date to court our victim, our viscous predator rears his ugly head much later during this love story. He woos and courts his victim with skill and grace, showing her what a great catch he is, lavishing attention and gifts on her, placing her on a pedestal. She is fully taken in by this "show" of love and devotion and although her family and friends don't seem to like or "get" him, she just takes that for a misunderstanding, because she sees a side of him that only he wants her to see and the others see him for who he is, a louse who is secreting their daughter or friend away and turning her against the people who will love and protect her from him. They're the enemy and his first order of business is to remove them from her life. Cut off her lifeline as it were. Once this is accomplished, much to her friends and families dismay, he is free to begin the break down process. She, once strong and independent has now entered into the dependency phase of the relationship. This is where he convinces her that her friends are whores and she shouldn't hang out with that type of crowd and how displeased he is in all the time she spends with anyone other than him. How she should let him buy her a car (in his name) and she should stay home, because he wants to provide for her. Successfully removing all of her freedom. She now belongs to him. Everything belongs to him and she will be reminded daily how little she actually has and how much she owes him for her very existence. Making her completely dependent on him for emotional and monetary support. Wait, we've just tipped the ice burg. This loving and adoring man will now begin the cruelest part of her nightmare, the emotional and mental abuse. This is when the temperature slowly starts to change. She is no longer the object of his affection, her pedestal has been knocked over; she is now a constant disappointment and a burden. The color of her hair is dull, her jeans are too tight, she wears too much make-up and dresses like a whore, she needs to exercise more, her food is bland, she should learn how to cook better so he "doesn't have to eat this kind of shit every night," why is she reading "she's never going to be smart." Who was she talking to on the phone, why was she looking at the bagger at the grocery store and the guy in the car next to them, she must want to f#*k him. The house is never clean enough the kids are loud and obnoxious, (they get it from her) and why is she is so f'n stupid? At this point she becomes the pleaser. If she were just a little thinner, better, faster, cleaner, smarter he would love her again, after all she must be doing something wrong, he's such a good guy, everyone thinks so (according to him) and she's so lucky to have him. After all look at (he reminds her everyday) how much he does for her. So she pleases and the more she pleases the more pleasure he derives from breaking her down. The words become harsher and the he starts fights to provoke ways to leave her alone to wallow in the self-pity of all of her shortcomings thus beginning the isolation phase. Now she is alone. Truly alone because her friends and family have

abandoned her frustrated with her blindness to this person who took over her life. She doesn't even know what is happening to her. She knows that there is unhappiness, but when her assailant wants to reel her back in he just pours on the charm and she thinks she's done just the right things to please him and she has her knight back, the only thing she has is a manipulative predator who knows how to push her buttons. So she stays and the abuse continues to worsen. She is still oblivious to his actions, because after-all its not abuse until someone gets hit, right? Right about now!!! Blindsided!!!!... and of course he didn't mean it... it just happened. If she had just kept her stupid mouth shut she wouldn't be laying on the floor crying. He's so sorry. Look he's crying. Sad. He's so very sad. It just breaks my heart that she will fall for this act that he puts on to make her feel like she hurt him! Wow! I hope you're getting the picture, but, I have a feeling I know what you're thinking, "I would never put up with that, I would get my things and leave right now!" But, what your not thinking about are all the threats and insecurity he has ingrained in her already, making leaving seem impossible. Threats like: I will take the children and you will never see them again. I will find you and then you'll regret it. If you leave me I will take everything, the car, the money the house and how will YOU EVER support yourself let alone the children you're too dumb, no one will ever want you, how could anyone love you, I just put up with you because I have to. Everything is mine and you have nothing and nowhere to go." The very sad part about this is that it is true. He will find her. He will take everything from her (he already has). Control is the main objective for an abuser and they maintain control of all aspects of the relationship, emotions, sex, and especially the finances. The master manipulator has already secreted away the money and placed her on an minimal allowance. The house, the car and all the credit cards are in his name and she has no means of supporting herself. Remember, she was removed from the work force because her abuser "wanted to take care of her" and now she has no skills to fall back on. So, as she is lying on the floor sobbing and holding her swelling bloody lip the realization of her situation surfaces and he is apologizing. He promises to get help and it will never happen again. He loves her so much, and if she wouldn't have said what she said he wouldn't have gotten so mad. Why is she always pushing his buttons? He tells her she should know better, as he strokes her hair. And, before you know it, he has convinced her that this was all her fault and she has apologized to him. They make up and the next day and for weeks to come he is the sweet charming guy she dated and she feels like its all been a bad dream... Until he grows weary of the "nice guy routine" and knows he's in the clear. And, before she knows what happened she is right back into pleaser role again.

The cycle begins again, only now the dominator knows he has her. He takes the abuse to a whole new level. Ignoring her while she speaks to him, watching TV and walking off in the middle of her conversations because what she has to say isn't worth listening to. Leaving her alone more often with out telling her where he is going or when he will return. He is sleeping with other women and when she approaches him with her concerns about this she is told that her insecurity is very unattractive and he would never do that to her, she is his angel. Later that night she's not sure what happened, but she finds herself being choked against the wall while he screams obscenities at her and spits in her face. All this was just a justification for him to exit the house without being questioned as to where he would be headed. And, she cries herself to sleep again. He returns in the early

morning hours and apologizes for hurting her again, but he can't take her constant questioning him and he just lost it and had to get out. After all he does for her and the kids, how could she treat him that way. He's under so much pressure and she's so selfish. Maybe if she didn't spend so much money he wouldn't have to work so hard and they would have more time together and maybe if she didn't ride his ass all the time he wouldn't snap and have to get so upset. He hates that side of himself and he loves her so much. She needs to be more sensitive to his needs. Again she apologizes for hurting him. And makes his favorite breakfast. He leaves without eating it and with out kissing her goodbye.

He puts her on time restraints when she leaves the house. After all it should only take twenty minutes to go to the grocery store for a family of five and when she is late all the groceries are smashed against the wall for her to clean up. That'll teach her to be late. And he leaves again. She is accused of sleeping with everyone she looks at so she keeps her head down when they leave the house together. Yet he ogles every girl within eyeshot and she is told she's crazy when she tells him that bothers her. Later that night he drags her out of the house in by her ankle, throws her in the driveway, tells her to leave with nothing but the pajamas she has on and then locks her out of the house. Again she realizes her dank reality and that she literally has nothing but the clothes on her back. That this person that supposedly loves her just physically threw her out of the home she has made and her children are locked inside, with him, the monster that she can't escape.

The children. In the midst of all this abuse where are the children? She wants what's best for her children, and what's best is to have a stable home with a mother and a father. God knows she has tried to make her home a happy place for them despite the constant strife. She is delusional. She doesn't see their tiny little eyes watching, taking in all the vulgar acts of violence that their father forces on their mother. She cannot protect their tiny ears from the hatred spewing from his mouth. Society teaches us to keep our families together at all cost and if you are divorced you are a failure. Children of divorce are somehow deemed less valuable than children from homes with two parents. Society turns their eyes away from the abused wife and mother and she is cast aside broken and homeless and her children suffer for her inadequacies. So she vows to stay to keep her family, her broken, battered, dysfunctional family together. She is operating under the misconception that this is somehow the safest decision for the children and she can withstand any abuse for their sake. She doesn't realize although the predator is not physically abusing the children, he is inflicting much more pain than she could ever know. This pain will last more than one lifetime. This pain may pass on to their children and their children's children. You see, the predator, their father, learned this behavior quite possibly as a tiny child himself and his legacy will be relived through his children if she does not rescue them. How is she to rescue them, when she was herself the same tiny child in the hands of an abusive parent. She doesn't realize how her childhood has brought her to this place and how it will be replayed through her children. Even now she is still hoping that she wakes and the nightmare ends.

The Encyclopedia Britannica:

Social and legal concept that, in the broadest sense, refers to any abuse that takes place among people living in the same household, although the term is often used specifically to refer to assaults upon women by their male partners. Estimated annual figures for the number of women in the United States who are subjected to psychological, verbal, emotional, or physical abuse by a male partner range from two to four million. Additional statistics indicate that domestic violence ranks as the leading cause of injury to women from age 15 to 44 and that one-third of the American women murdered in any given year are killed by current or former boyfriends or husbands.

Perpetrators of domestic violence come from all socioeconomic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. The stresses of poverty contribute to violence and seem to make the problem more common among those at the bottom of the class structure, but nonetheless most poor people are not violent. Being reared in abusive circumstances makes men more likely to be abusers and women more likely to be victims, but most children reared under these conditions are neither abusers nor victims. In a few cases men are beaten by women, although rarely do men suffer serious physical injury.

Frequently there is no workable solution for female victims of domestic violence. For some victims the unrelenting cycle of violence produces diminished self-esteem, helplessness, depression, and exaggerated feelings of imprisonment, even the belief that they deserve abuse. More material obstacles stand in the way of most victims. Many are financially dependent on their abusers, and, since many abuse victims are mothers, they particularly fear being unable to support their children if they leave a violent partner. Many fear reporting the crime because the police can offer no reliable protection against men's retaliation. One of the worst problems is that typical abusers often become most violent and vengeful precisely when women try to leave; numbers of women have been murdered by husbands literally inside courthouses as they try to press charges or to win orders of protection.

In the early 1800s most legal systems implicitly accepted wife-beating as a husband's right, part of his entitlement to control over the resources and services of his wife. Feminist agitation in the 1800s produced a sea change in public opinion, and by the end of the 19th century most courts denied that husbands had any right to "chastise" their wives. But few women had realistic sources of help, and most police forces did nothing to protect women. The 1967 training manual for the International Association of Chiefs of Police stated that arrests in instances of domestic violence were to be made only as a "last resort."

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