WHEN HIS EYES TURNED WHITE
Surviving Domestic Terrorism and Legal Abuse Syndrome
In The Irish Secret Family Courts

Catherine Ni Mhuillín
BA, HDipEd, TTG
I wrote it in order to give the readers an inside view into the secret world of family law business, which is rarely spoken of.

I wanted other women to be educated in the true reality of coming forward and how the process actually works.

The shock of the real experience totally traumatised me and left me traumatised for years. The term now used for this is ‘legal abuse syndrome’.

I also wanted to open the readers’ eyes to the secret court system, which assists the perpetrators in their violence.

Having studied domestic terrorism in University a few years before my own experience, I was shocked to the core to learn that this was – and still is – not the true reality at all.

All the professionals who taught me had never actually been inside these family law courts, because the law did not allow it, so society has little or no idea of what happens to victims of domestic terrorism in the actual court itself.

In this book I give an inside view of the typical charming domestic terrorist and how he operates and fools the vast majority of family and friends, before going on to groom the trained professionals.

I also explain the abuse tactics used by so-called professionals on a daily basis in order to silence the victims.

It took years for all involved to realise that the domestic terrorist has the skills of a psychopath, and that he uses them with precision.
I tried many times to write this book, but the emotions were too much and I kept becoming ill. A friend suggested I get someone to assist me and this worked really well. Without Jessica, this book would still be a diary in the library at home.

The more professionals and victims of domestic terrorism I met, the more I realised I was not alone.

I realised that the voices of victims were not being heard due to gagging orders and the ‘in camera’ rule.

I felt it my duty to write and bring this entire domestic terrorism business to light.

To expose why victims do not come forward and why I do not blame them.

To tell the truth, once and for all.

**Catherine Ni Mhuillin BA, HDipEd, TTG**
As Catherine sat in the reception room of yet another lawyer’s office, she was overcome with the futility of nearly twenty years spent trying to find legal justice for both her and her children.

Would this ever end? Would she ever get the results she wanted? How much longer would she have to suffer through this seemingly ceaseless nightmare?

It was all beginning to seem like it would, in fact, never come to any conclusion at all, let alone the one she so desperately wanted.

Staring into the distance, she contemplated the horrendous grief they had all endured – all those days and nights filled with agonising worry and anguish – and thought to herself, without a hint of humour, “I should have just killed the bastard when I had the chance.”
From the west of Ireland in 1953, with the redistribution of the land. Due to Ireland becoming a republic in 1948, the small farmers in Mayo had a choice to come up to good land in Meath, and my dad was among them. My mother’s family also migrated from Mayo to Meath. These farms were all twenty-two acres, and most of the families were large, with couples having between six to twenty-one children.

Solicitor: And what about your parents? What were they like when you were young? What did they do for work?

Catherine: My father was a lot older than my mother – fourteen years in fact – and their relationship was typical of married couples at the time. Back then, it was taboo to hug and kiss in front of anyone, even if you were married. Therefore, there was never any public affection between them. Instead, my father showed his affection by making sure that my mother had every modern convenience to help with the housework; for instance, he bought her the first washing machine in the whole area. He always spoke kindly of my mother, but that was the limit to them showing affection for each other.

My mother only really married for security, not love, and she was bitter that she was stuck in this marriage, resenting the fact that she had to have children; she was left deeply traumatised by the birth of my brother, eleven months before me (we were both born in 1954). For one thing, she preferred doing farm work as opposed to staying in the home and looking after the children. Dad, on the other hand, loved being with us and showed his affection freely with lots of hugs and cuddles. My mother was simply incapable of doing this.

My father was both a father and mother to all the...
children. He brushed our hair for us in the mornings before school, and made potato cakes for us to put in our pockets to keep us warm on the walk in. He was a farmer, a brilliant one, and he worked really hard all of the time in order to look after his family, while my mother took care of the house and helped on the farm where she could. Up until the 1970s, married women were not allowed to work in Ireland in most jobs, so it’s not like she really had any other choice. My mum had worked in service in Dublin, and then in a pub before marrying my dad, and she would have loved to have had a job instead of working on the farm. She wanted to be a professional teacher – or something similar – and the fact that she was doing farm work instead only doubled her bitterness. It was as if as soon as she got married, she felt trapped. In more ways than one.

My dad, however, gave her great freedoms, especially compared to the other husbands in the area (who often treated their wives and children in an almost draconian manner, making all the rules in their homes). My dad was considered very liberal at the time, and as I said, he bought all the latest machines to assist my mother in the home. Everything he could think of was done to make life easier for all of us. I don’t know if my mum appreciated this, but I did.

Solicitor: What was your relationship like with your father, in particular?

Catherine: I have many great memories of my father from when I was younger. For one thing, he was an amazing story teller; every night we would sit and listen to him tell us all of these wonderful tales while we sipped hot cocoa that he’d made for us especially. He also encouraged us to repeat the stories back to him, and whoever completed this task the best would get 6p for their trouble. Thinking back, these times really shaped my love of stories.

Another fond memory I have of him is that he always had a huge fire burning, making us all feel extremely warm and safe. In fact, he had this effect on us in general; he was always there for us, day and night, giving us whatever we needed. He also tucked all of his children in bed every single night without fail, a memory which has stayed with me ever since. Whenever we were ill (with measles or mumps or jaundice), it was Dad who took care of us all. Like the fire he always kept burning, he made us feel safe and free of fear.

Solicitor: How about your siblings? Did you get on well with them? How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Catherine: I had three brothers and three sisters, five of which were younger than me (I only had one older brother). I got on really well with all of the younger siblings, but not so much with my older brother. I think this is because I felt like a little mother to the younger ones, and I did everything for them – cooked, clothed them, got them ready for school, changed nappies, bottle fed them, and so on.

My older brother was different, and I always suspected that he was jealous of the rest of us. He definitely had a sadistic nature; he tried to murder me twice, just because I got higher grades than him in school. One of these times, he used a farm axe to hit me on the back of the head, and the other time he tried to smother me with a pillow. He almost succeeded.

Solicitor: Tell me more about your older brother. What happened with the axe and the pillow?
Catherine: Well, life certainly was not made any easier by his presence. Even though he was a year older than me, he was extremely jealous of my skills at school, as well as my ability to physically outrun him. The fact that a girl – a younger girl, as well – was faster than him did not go down well at all.

One day, completely out of the blue, he got an axe and chased me around with it, finally throwing it at me and hitting me on the back of my head. I told my mother about this, but I was forbidden to mention the incident to anyone outside the family, for fear of the Social Services coming and taking him away – my mother was all about protecting my brother, not me.

Worse still would be the shame that would come to the family name if the neighbours learned that he was violent. It’s just the way it was back then. After this first attack, my father chased my brother and beat him, but no one else found out about that incident, either. Life was all about keeping up appearances in those days. My older brother also set upon my younger brother once, and my father had to physically break down the door in order to get in and throw my older brother out.

Apparently, the axe attack was my fault for doing better than him at school, and sometime later – when I got better grades than him again – he attempted to smother me with a pillow. I remember it all so well: being asleep in bed with my arms under the covers, suddenly unable to breathe.

The sudden shock of feeling trapped and unable to move was horrific. Quickly, I realised what was happening – that my brother had straddled himself across my chest and neck – and tried to get up. He was much stronger than I was, however, and I remained pinned under the bed clothes, unable to use my arms. It got to the point where I could feel myself slipping away, powerless to do anything, but then something happened.

Suddenly, from deep inside me, came a presence of mind and an incredible strength to survive. I managed to hook my foot round the edge of the bed and pull myself onto the floor to escape. If I had spoken of this then, I would have been punished by my mother – my brother could do no harm in her eyes. I also didn’t want to tell my father, as he was ill at the time and I didn’t want to give him anything else to worry about. I was just so stunned and in shock at what my brother had done – as well as feeling glad to be alive – that I became hyper-vigilant afterwards. Ever since that terrible day, I’ve always slept with my arms over the covers and my right foot on the floor.

Solicitor: What were you like as a child? Do you have any memories in particular that stick with you from your early childhood?

Catherine: I was a very independent child; I learned to look after myself from an early age, walking, talking, and even doing things like throwing away nappies all by myself. However, instead of being seen as an early developer (as might happen in England now), this was looked upon with suspicion; because I was so advanced for my age, I was thought to be a witch. This was common at the time – psychic children, or just gifted and talented children, were also deemed witches, or thought to be possessed by the devil. Because of this, my mother called in the services of the Catholic Church and soon, I was the subject of an exorcism.

It was horrific. A priest, a doctor, my uncle, and my mother came dressed in black hoods and clothes, and proceeded to do the exorcism. This consisted of the priest using knuckle dusters to penetrate every disk in my spine,
with the aim being for the pain to drive the Devil out. It
definitely wasn’t an exorcism of saying prayers like people
may think of now; it was torture. Pure and simple.

For years I had nightmares of the terrible pain (and still
do), as well as vivid memories of my mother obeying the
man of God, checking if I was still alive by placing her fin-
ger under my nose to feel for signs of breathing. I have a
very clear memory of the priest asking my mother, over
and over again, if I was still alive.

I also clearly remember the small white coffin at the bot-
tom of the bed. Of course, at the time I had no concept of
death, or what the coffin was for; it only all made sense
when I talked to my dad about it before he passed on. I
wondered why my mother had allowed it, and I still don’t
understand it. I suppose she was just completely controlled
by the Roman Catholic guilt.

The man of God kept prodding my spine with what felt
like knuckle dusters (while saying not to leave any marks),
and due to the pain being inflicted on me, I faded in and
out of consciousness, giving the whole process a very
surreal feeling. I could also hear them discussing what
would happen if I didn’t make it: they all agreed that they
would tell people I’d died from having some kind of ill-
ness. The concern was for the cover up and certainly not
for me, the child. Their only real concern was to drive the
‘invisible witch’ out of me, even if that meant killing me.
It was like a scene from medieval times, and yet, it wasn’t
rare in those days. Even now, in 2014, there is a school of
Exorcism in Italy – unbelievable.

Luckily, my father came home earlier than expected and
took me in his arms, making me feel protected like he
always did. He took me everywhere with him, and little
did I realise – until my father’s last days when he shared
the truth with me – that he did this to prevent any further
torture being inflicted upon me. He also explained to me
that, due to the church, he couldn’t divorce my mother, so
the only way to protect me was to keep me away from her
as much as possible.

My mother was unable to cope with the children – as
she had four that were under the age of five – and because
of this, she became an abuser. It was mostly emotional. For
example, she told us that she despised her life and she
would always complain about how she never wanted so
many children in the first place, but that she had no choice
due to the church teachings. She would promise us treats,
such as some ice cream after we’d finished a twelve hour
stint of working on the farm, but then take it away again
by saying that the shop was closed. Her promises were like
grains of sand in the desert, which was devastating to me,
as I was such a bright child and I always loved to help, de-
spite never getting anything back in return.

Solicitor: What was life on the farm like? Did you have to
help out a lot when you were younger?

Catherine: For one thing, farms back then were different
to farms now; initially, all of the work was done manually,
and as it was a time before tractors, we only had a work
horse, and later on, a donkey. We also had a dairy farm and
a potato farm, as well as growing all of our own fruit and
vegetables.

After a few years, the family got a car, and every day
over summer I’d go with Dad to the market in Dublin,
having to leave at about 5 a.m. to get there in time. This
was our special time together, and we shared our thoughts
and feelings on all kinds of things, from family ancestors
to family who lived far away, from Dad’s childhood to how
things were with my mother, and so on. He would tell me
Catherine: I went to school at the age of five. Our school was about three miles away from where we lived, and we would all walk there together. When I was very small, my father would sometimes take me to school on his bike, which I, in turn, did with my sister when she was very small. For the younger children, there was a new bus service.

I absolutely loved school, flourishing in the learning environment. I couldn’t get enough knowledge and I always wanted to learn as much as I could about everything, something which my teacher spotted. She would try and nurture my yearning for knowledge and would give me extra books to take home (my mother, however, never allowed library books or ‘fairy tales’ in the house, as these were seen as being a waste of time).

Like all children, I loved to be praised and always strove to do better. No matter how well I did in school, however, my mother always said that I ought to have done better – even 100% in an exam was not enough. She also told me repeatedly that I shouldn’t ever expect to be praised, as it was bad for me; I would become big-headed. This conditioning – like many of the strict rules in our lives – came from the Roman Catholic Church.

I also loved attending Russian dancing classes, but unfortunately, I was banned from going by my mother, who told me that the only women who danced were ‘whores’. My mother also never let us play with any other children, so we kept mostly to ourselves. I always thought this was very odd – in some ways, we were like kept rabbits. It felt like prison. There was hardly any time for me to play, anyway, as I was working 99% of the time, both inside and outside, from dawn to dusk, usually in the cold. Even at the age of six and seven, I was sometimes left alone for hours outside in the dark, loading turnips onto the donkey.
and cart, and while I wasn’t afraid of the dark, I hated being out in the cold; I just couldn’t understand why everyone else in the family was inside in the warmth, while I was alone with the donkey.

During the rare times when we weren’t at school or working on the farm, we would play in the orchard at home, or come up with things to amuse ourselves. As we didn’t have toys like children do today, we had to make our own fun, and I would always pretend to be a horse, running around and making high jumps and long jumps.

**Solicitor**: And what about secondary school? Did you attend?

**Catherine**: I’m proud to say that everyone in my family went to secondary school. Not all children did in those days; most went to work full time in factories or on farms when they were just thirteen or fourteen years old. It was the norm back then for children of fourteen to go to work and marry young, but free education came in just before I became a teenager, which meant I could continue learning. So, at the age of twelve I went into secondary education, and although I was very small for my age, I managed well. However, even if the free education hadn’t have come in, my parents would have come up with the money somehow; my dad was determined that we would be educated.

It was a very lonely time for me, as making friends with the children in the big town was forbidden by my mother. So, I kept quiet and got on with my studies, determined to succeed at school and to earn a scholarship to University. I really threw myself into academic life, getting involved with the school debating team, which I loved. We got to travel by bus to other schools, and it was such a freedom as I’d never experienced before. It was thrilling.

The secondary school was eight miles away from where we lived, but we didn’t have to walk: there was a bus that took us all the way there. My older brother and I were in the same year, but we attended separate boys’ and girls’ schools. There were about sixty girls in my entire school, and it consisted of just two rooms, with junior up to 2nd class in one room and classes 3, 4, 5 and 6 in the other. The boys’ school was a similar layout and had a similar number of students.

**Solicitor**: Do you have any darker memories from this time in your life?

**Catherine**: The sexual abuse began when I was about eleven years old, continuing on and off for quite a few years. It took place when I was sent to the village on my own for groceries, where a family friend would offer to give me a lift in his car. I didn’t, however, suspect that he intended to abuse me sexually; I had no knowledge of ‘the birds and the bees’ as they used to say back then. I just knew that it felt wrong. It got to the point where I would go into the fields to hide if I saw his car coming – sometimes I was lucky, sometimes I wasn’t. I tried to tell my mother what was happening on numerous occasions, but just couldn’t.

It didn’t help that she called him a ‘pillar of society’ and that he would come round our house regularly. I did wonder why my mother never noticed my facial expression change to one of horror whenever he came in, or that I’d hide and cringe and try and stay out of his way – maybe she did notice but just didn’t want to bring it up. Of course, I realise now (through healing) that abusers are charmers and that they generally prey on children whose parents trust them.
My mother preached to me constantly about girls who got themselves ‘into trouble’ (in other words, pregnant), and that if I ever got ‘into trouble’ myself, then I was not to come home, ever. Back then, I felt that the abuse was all my fault; after all, it was always Eve’s fault in the Bible. The Eve females were always the ill ones (the Eve ill ones) who led men astray and brought rape and abuse upon themselves, whereas the poor Adam males were never blamed.

One day on my way to school, I was so cold that I hid behind a wall for warmth. I had been warned never to go near this wall as it belonged to a Protestant family, so although I was scared and wary, my survival instinct took over and I went behind this forbidden wall for shelter. Of course, nothing happened: no one leapt out of a coffin and attacked me, and I didn’t burst into flames on the spot, either. In the end, I forced myself to carry on to school, sure that if I stopped there any longer, I would surely die. When I got there, my teacher placed me in front of the fire to warm me up (we had no central heating in those days, so every day, the children would go and collect sticks for the fire the following day) and the feeling slowly began to come back into all of my fingers and toes. Just another memory of how bleak my childhood sometimes was.

Solicitor: Did any of these darker times in your childhood have anything to do with your ‘gifted’ nature? Did this continue after the attempted exorcism?

Catherine: Most definitely. At around this time, I was seemingly always in trouble with my mother, due to certain gifts I had. For example, I was always saying who was going to visit and what was going to happen. I would bake cakes, knowing that my Aunt and Uncle would come to visit the next day, and they always did. We had no phone until I was fifteen, so this would scare my mother; she would do her Medusa dance and scream at me when I said things like that. As a child, I actually thought that everyone could do what I did. I never saw anything wrong with it and I couldn’t understand my mother’s reaction – it was just baffling to me.

So, my mother was having none of this ‘witch stuff’ in her house, and it finally came to a head when I was warned for the last time to either turn off the psychic aspect of myself or be sent to a reform school (similar to the Magdalene Sisters Institute). As children, we were warned of the awful horrors of the Maggie Institutions by our parents, who used the idea of this terrible place to control us and our behaviour. Not knowing what else to do, I looked to the sky (on a beautiful sunny day which I remember well) and sent that part of myself back home to the stars. I cried for days at the huge feeling of loss; it was as if someone whom I loved dearly had died. In fact, part of me did die, as I learned in later life.

This is something that is very hard for me to verbalise, and I don’t know how, but I always knew that I was from the stars. With the serious threat of being sent away to a Magdalene home, I knew I had to switch the star aspect of myself off until I was fifty years old – if I didn’t, I seriously believed that my mother and the men of God would kill me. In terms of actually doing this, I have no idea how I knew what to do. I cried for three straight days and then, suddenly, I was normal (well, for the most part). I was like everyone else, and I remember feeling incredibly slow and pretty much half-dead. I promised myself that at the age of fifty it would be safe to go on a journey and bring the psychic star aspect of myself back. I actually forgot all about this until November 2004, when out of the blue, I
knew I had to go on an astral journey. I wanted to do this to see if that special part of me would come back – and I was worried that I might not be able to protect her now that I was an adult – but she did come back, and I did protect her. I became the mother of myself and the inner star child.

*Solicitor:* You mention that your mother was heavily under the influence of the Catholic Church. Do you have any other memories of how this influence affected you as a child?

*Catherine:* One Christmas, I remember the priest coming to the house for his Christmas box (a sort of full hamper of food, one of which he would collect from every single house). This was a special occasion, with my mother bringing out the best china and warning all the children to be on our best behaviour. The priest came, but the main thing I remember was when he was leaving; before he went on his merry way, he asked me to wash and shine his shoes – because he was too fat to bend down and do it himself.

Well, I looked at my mother (expecting her to say no, to stand up for me, her child), but this didn’t happen; unfortunately, this was the power of the Church back then. So, like Cinderella, I knelt down and proceeded to wash the pig dung from his shoes and shine them. To this day, I can still recall the disgust and humiliation of this episode, and I now always associate that horrible smell with men of God. In those days, the Catholic Church had this unseen control over people; you had to stay on their good side in order to get anywhere in life, as quite often you would need a reference from your local parish priest.

Another thing I didn’t understand as a child was why a priest who was known to abuse boys was never arrested. Everyone was aware of Father Sean, but all that happened was that children were warned not to go and get a mass signed if he was on duty. Of course, these days, I understand; there was always a safe haven provided for them. Yes, sometimes they will be brought before the courts, but I feel that this is just to make people believe in the justice system. After all, the courts are run by the same Roman Church with judges who attend the annual Red Mass, and they invoke this same invisible man in the sky to guide them in their judgements. This is the same God who dictates that pain and suffering are good for the soul – for the souls of women and children, especially.

*Solicitor:* What other responsibilities were put upon you when you were a child?

*Catherine:* Well, for one thing, I had to find out about a lot of things myself, as I received no motherly guidance whatsoever. One evening, everything came crashing down around me. I was at the house of a relative when I discovered that I was now a woman. Now, this might not sound like much, but I had never been told a single thing about monthly cycles or any of the science behind it, and I quickly became hysterical. My cousin tried to help me, explaining a little about it and saying that my mother would tell me everything later.

Well, of course, this didn’t happen; instead, my mother walked out of the room in disgust and never mentioned it ever again (at the time, it was completely taboo to speak of things such as monthly cycles). This event forced me into a deep state of emotional turmoil that none of my friends or family knew anything about. This new knowledge – and the memories of my past abuse – haunted me daily. I thought I was dirty and that no one would ever love me in the future. Even though I felt protected by my
that a doctor from Dublin came and gave my father the Addison’s disease diagnosis, and soon after, my father came home. His health was up and down, of course, and he constantly suffered from fatigue, but amazingly, he always smiled his way through it. When he was no longer able to do a lot of the farm work, he did all of the house work and cooking instead. We all helped our mother out with the farm work when our father could not, but she was never satisfied with our attempts.

Fortunately, my father lived on for many years, though he was constantly in and out of the hospital due to the doctors failing to diagnose him for so long. I was just so pleased that he lived to attend my graduation from University.

Solicitor: Tell me more about your journey from secondary school to University.

Catherine: As my first school didn’t have the subjects I wanted, after two years of studying there I decided to do something about it. My parents were no help in this regard, as neither of them had been to secondary school and so didn’t know what it was like. At this point, I discovered the telephone for the first time, and I remember that day incredibly well. To many people, it might not sound like much, but to me, it was everything. I remember cycling to the end of the road and seeing that there was a signpost pointing in the direction of Dublin.

It was at that very moment that I realised there were other places out there – a whole other world, in fact. A world I could actually visit. My face actually lights up whenever I recall that day. I remember it so clearly because my mother never allowed us children to have any friends or to go anywhere except school, so finding this sign was
incredibly exciting. It made me realise that there was somewhere else I could go, if I tried hard enough to get there. After this, I was more determined than ever to telephone a Member of Parliament so they could arrange for me to transfer schools. Well, it worked! My new school was everything I dreamed of, and the teachers did everything they could to help me do three years’ worth of work in just one. It was tough going, but I did it.

Unlike many other school leavers, I managed to get a scholarship to University at the age of seventeen. As my family were poor, I had to get four honours grades in order to be eligible, and it was extremely competitive – just two of us in my class managed to get scholarships. As no one else in my family had ever been to a higher education institution, I went in completely blind; I had no idea what University education entailed or what University life was like. It wasn’t like today – with a prospectus and an open day – and so I signed up for a course that one teacher recommended to me, with no idea that there were other options available.

**Solicitor:** Where did you attend? And how did you find University life?

**Catherine:** I attended Maynooth University and I loved it. I was actually the first woman to attend an all-male seminary college, so I felt a little lost for a while. I was drifting along, really, perhaps because I had lost parts of myself along my journey to get to University, but this didn’t occur to me until recently. Then, I got a room of my own in a house, and everything changed.

Life was total bliss; I had a place to myself, a bed of my very own (I’d never had a bed for myself before, let alone a room), and I was far away from all the demanding members of my family. I was surrounded by books, and I was in Heaven. It was such a complete change to what I was used to I can barely describe the relief I felt when I first moved in. There was no more living in fear of my mother and brother, and no more sleeping on the floor or the sofa. By this point, I was only really interested in getting my degree and becoming a teacher.

**Solicitor:** Did you visit the farm during your time at University?

**Catherine:** Yes. I would live away during the week and then return home at the weekends to help both on the farm and at the farmer’s market, which I used to do every summer. My dad and I did the market every Saturday (apart from when he was ill, when I would drive there and do it on my own), selling potatoes, carrots, onions, strawberries, flowers and anything else that was surplus at home. We would often pick cabbage early in the mornings before heading off with the car and the trailer. The money we earned at the market was then used to buy our shopping for the following week.

I was often extremely cold, as it would be six a.m. in the depths of winter when we set off to the market, and even with our sandwiches and our flasks of hot tea to warm us up, it would still be freezing. Even so, I loved every minute of working at the market, meeting all the different people and being with my dad when he was well enough. In fact, these were some of the happiest times that I can recall. I was completely at home there, mixing with all kinds of different people.

The only thing that I never understood was why my mother never gave me even a single penny for doing all that work. Then, after my weekend of helping out (and
were, and one day we went to Provincetown to get our weekly wages. We went to a club (which turned out to be a gay club) and started getting chatted up by these women – we had no idea what they were doing or why they were touching us sexually! The owner of the motel had to explain it all to us that evening; she couldn’t believe how naïve and innocent we all were.

Another memory I have is of when we were hitchhiking one time. These Puerto Rican men stopped to pick us up, and they were all high on drugs. It was a kidnapping, really – they were going in the wrong direction. My friend froze, which was no help whatsoever, but I charmed the men so nicely that they finally let us out. My friend – still frozen – had to be lifted out. It was a lucky escape.

Solicitor: And what other experiences did you have while at University? Did you do any travelling further afield?

Catherine: After my first year at University – and very much against my mother’s wishes – I went to work in America for the summer, having borrowed the money for the flight from the bank. I had a little money of my own, and my father gave me some more at the airport (behind my mother’s back, of course) which meant that I could pay for a room for three nights when I got there, as well as the bus fare to Cape Cod. I had no job arranged, and so I was extremely lucky when I met a man who was looking for summer staff. I worked as a waitress, a chambermaid, a cook, and a babysitter, and I was really happy there. It was just so different to what I was used to.

My time in America was a great adventure, and I was so happy to get out of Ireland for a while. I thought that I’d be free of the religion stuff out there, though, and I wasn’t; I was shocked to find that at my first night in the motel, a Catholic priest found me and asked if I would be at mass on Sunday! It seems they learn to seek you out, even in Cape Cod. Luckily, I was working every Sunday (or I made sure I was)!

There is one memory that sticks in my mind from my time in America. I had never been told what gay people were, and one day we went to Provincetown to get our weekly wages. We went to a club (which turned out to be a gay club) and started getting chatted up by these women – we had no idea what they were doing or why they were touching us sexually! The owner of the motel had to explain it all to us that evening; she couldn’t believe how naïve and innocent we all were.

Another memory I have is of when we were hitchhiking one time. These Puerto Rican men stopped to pick us up, and they were all high on drugs. It was a kidnapping, really – they were going in the wrong direction. My friend froze, which was no help whatsoever, but I charmed the men so nicely that they finally let us out. My friend – still frozen – had to be lifted out. It was a lucky escape.

Solicitor: What did you do once you’d finished University?

Catherine: It was my dad’s dream to see us graduate, and all three of his girls did, in fact, graduate from the same University. He was in hospital at the time, but he checked himself out so he could be at my graduation; nothing would have prevented him from being there that day. You could tell just by looking at him that he was so proud of me; it was written all over his face.

Because of my dad’s health, I was focused more on that than my actual graduation, so I didn’t really think about it too much at the time. In fact, I didn’t initially intend to go to my graduation at all – for fear that my mother would do her usual over-the-top boasting at people, even though she secretly thought I hadn’t done enough – but I went anyway. By then, I was onto teacher training and further study.

I then went on to do a higher diploma in education, and when I got my first position at a Protestant school for a
Marriage

Solicitor: Now, tell me about your husband. When did you first meet him?

Catherine: I met my husband at a dance in 1981, and at that time in my life, I was a teacher (I had been teaching since 1977, with huge success). The first thing I noticed about him were his amazing blue eyes. He was as quiet as a mouse, very soft spoken and extremely charming. We soon got to talking and he told me all about how he’d lost his father, and how his mother had gone into a deep depression ever since, especially in the long, dark days of winter. His mother did seem to do most of the farm work, though.

I fell deeply in love with him from the moment I laid eyes on him. I did, however, have some doubts; there was a little voice inside my head saying, “No, this guy is too sweet to be wholesome. Something isn’t quite right here”. Well, of course, the little voice is always right, but I made the mistake of convincing myself I could change him for the better. He spoke of abuse as a child, too, and of how he blamed his mother and sisters for everything after his father died. His sisters avoided him all the time but I never stopped to ask him why; I felt sorry for him and I guess he took advantage of that.

Still, I shared all my dreams with my future husband. Because I felt sorry for him, I suggested ways in which he
which was a huge mess – a place stuck in time. So, soon after, I started planning out our new home. I designed it all by myself and also did a lot of manual work alongside the builders – I just loved the whole process, from concept to completion. I had such an abundance of energy back in those days.

Solicitor: How did you come up with the plans for the new home?

Catherine: I'd always wanted to restore an old building, ever since I was a child, but as it turned out, this was a new build from scratch. My uncle was in the building trade, which helped, and as for the designing part, I just planned the house out on paper, aiming for a Bed and Breakfast business I could run in the future. I knew it would be successful due to its proximity to Ireland’s most important heritage site – Bru Na Boinne, the Fairy Palace of the Sidhe – and so I knew we'd have a full house every night.

Then I got a draftsman to draw up some professional plans. I found it easy to help out with the build; I was so used to mucking in on my home farm, helping to mix cement and so on, that it came naturally to me. Although we subcontracted out all of the stages of the build, I was on site every day and always helped the tradesmen out. I loved it. In fact, I was more than happy working up to twenty hours a day, sometimes. Sadly, my husband-to-be was lazy beyond words, and the more I worked, the more he left it to me. I just never noticed how bad it was until later on.

One aspect which I spent a lot of time on were some amazing Victorian-style teak windows, which I made, treated and painted myself. I also got the kitchen especially made from my own design (as I’m short, I needed the

Solicitor: And what about marriage? How did he propose?

Catherine: When the time came for him to ask for my hand in marriage, it was all very practical and traditional; he asked my dad for permission first, and then he asked me. That was pretty much it, and to be honest, I didn't really know what romance was in those days, anyway. It was just simple: he was very quiet and I liked him. I felt that, finally, happiness was in store for me. I dreamed of us both doing jobs on the farm at the weekends and in the evenings after teaching, working together as a team.

Solicitor: What about marriage? How did he propose?
cabinets lower down than normal). The whole kitchen was 100% solid teak, with every single part of it designed in detail by me. I was the one who did all the hard work from day one, but I didn’t mind. It was my own house and I bought everything for it for over two years – I was a good bargain hunter. I also bought a lot of hotelware on sale too, such as good quality tableware for the B&B business. I bought the electric washing machine, the cooker, the fridge, everything. My heart and soul went into that house. It was my fairy castle dream home.

Solicitor: What was your actual wedding like?

Catherine: We married in April of 1983. The wedding was a small family affair; my cousin married us in a church by the sea. I didn’t want my dad spending lots of money on just one day, so we didn’t have a huge celebration. I was so busy seeing to all of the details that I wasn’t sure how I felt during the run up to the day, but on the morning of the wedding, I knew that something wasn’t right; I could feel it in my soul. However, it was too late to pull out at that point. Within just two hours of us exchanging our vows, my husband changed right in front of me. What I saw was not the same man I’d fallen in love with, not at all. Suddenly, it was like he was the boss and I was his possession. He was ice cold towards me from the moment we said ‘I do’, and as soon as I realised this, I wondered what on earth I’d done. Within those two hours, I was already regretting allowing him to put the Saturn ring on my finger.

I realised that he’d married me for my money, and when this thought occurred to me, my heart sank. I hit rock bottom. Still, I decided to make the most of it and try and be happy, but this was easier said than done. I had never had sex before marriage – this was common in those days, and was certainly expected in my family – so on my wedding night, I was devastated to learn that my new husband only wanted sex, and nothing more intimate. As it was our honeymoon, I was expecting a wonderful, soft, gentle lovemaking session, but what I got was something I describe as ‘The Tesco Express’. There were no gentle touches, no kind words and no ‘I love you’. It was, in fact, forced sex. There was no foreplay, no fun, no treating me like I was loved at all. Afterwards, he turned his back on me in bed and fell asleep, and I cried all night long. ‘If only I could escape this marriage’, I thought that night. ‘This is not my dream; this is a nightmare’.

How had I not seen through it all? I saw the change in him towards me as soon as the ring was on my finger. He now possessed me like a chattel and began asserting his male privilege within hours. I could suddenly see and feel clearly, but by then it was too late. These days, I believe that this is all part of learning and that there’s no point in beating myself up about it any more than I have done; I used to do this for years.

Solicitor: Did this lack of interest in intimacy carry on throughout the marriage?

Catherine: Yes it did. Of course, now, later in life, I have learned that sex and lovemaking are two completely different experiences. When I was growing up, I learned that sex was something dirty and which – above all – was not to be enjoyed. Shudder the thought that I might derive pleasure from it! I had hoped to change this taboo in my own marriage, and I bought books such as the Kama Sutra, visualising being loved in every cell of my being and of returning that love to my husband. I simply was not prepared for the reality of being used as a sexual object.
Every time, as soon as the sexual act was completed, my husband would just turn away from me and fall asleep. I spent almost every night in tears. There were no hugs, no loving embraces, nothing.

I did, however, want to have children, and after a year, I fell pregnant. It was a dream come true for me, and I swore to myself that any children I had, I would love them and show them this love every single day in every way imaginable. I was adamant about breaking the pattern of my own tainted childhood, vowing that there would never be another generation of abuse or of pretending there was nothing wrong. I visualised the closeness that I would experience with my children, and that closeness is still there today, even though my children have long since grown up. I speak about my children with pride and joy – of their tough times together and of the love bond that binds us together forever.

_Solicitor:_ How was your first pregnancy?

_Catherine:_ I was ill all the time during my pregnancy with baby Robert, but I never complained; in those days in Ireland women didn’t dare complain. The thinking was that women were supposed to suffer in childbirth and just put up with it, and that all this suffering was supposed to be good for their souls. The Roman Catholic hospitals were notorious for making the birth more difficult than it needed to be, and in the event of any problem during labour, their policy was – and still is – to always allow the mother to die and save the child. This is because the mother is seen as a mere breeder for the Roman Catholic Church.

I myself was definitely made to feel like a breeder; my husband showed no emotion towards me or the baby in my womb. I was a nuisance because I was ill so much of the time and therefore unable to do as much of the work as I used to. In the last weekend of my pregnancy, I developed pre-eclampsia and was admitted into hospital to be induced. On that very day, my husband kept delaying driving me to the hospital as a cow was about to give birth. He was totally detached from me and his baby, giving priority to the animal and her offspring. I suggested calling the vet and leaving the cow to the professionals, but he simply replied with, “No, it would cost money”. In hindsight, I wonder if he wanted the baby at all.

To speed things up, I went out, delivered the calf myself, and then we went to the hospital. I was thinking of baby Robert all the time. While I couldn’t just drive myself with such high blood pressure, I did consider it – I just wanted to get to the hospital. I was very stressed indeed.

The doctors had warned against stress, but my husband was oblivious. He was just in a world of his own. I spent the night in hospital, scared, alone, and with red lights flashing in my eyes. My blood pressure was now so high that I was given an epidural, which slowed everything down for hours. Another epidural followed but I was still in agony. Nurses were present physically, but not mentally. It was definitely not the delightful experience I visualised.

Finally, late in the night, things changed and baby Robert decided it was time to present himself to the world. Then, suddenly, the panic began as the baby was in distress with the cord tightening around his neck. I was on a trolley in the corridor of the hospital at the time. Nurses panicked and began screaming, asking why the obstetrician had gone home, when I had specifically paid private for him to be present.

The lack of reassurance from nurses was very noticeable indeed. I expected my husband to speak out more and
to be close to me, but although he was physically present, that was it. There was no emotion from him towards me or his son.

I remember feeling like a side of beef being thrown from the trolley onto the theatre table. No one explained anything to me. In those days in the 1990s, mothers in Ireland were seen as less than human and were always categorised with the children, not as separate entities.

**Solicitor:** What happened with the birth after that? And how were things when you were able to take the baby home?

**Catherine:** After an episiotomy, baby Robert was delivered safe and well. I expected my husband to be overjoyed with his new son, but there was no emotion whatsoever from him. It might as well have been a doll. He had no interest in holding or feeding his son, and changing him was totally out of the question. I had made the mistake of believing that all fathers were like mine: loving and caring and protective. I returned home after six days in hospital.

When I got home, I began to notice the pain, but as I was so afraid of disturbing anyone, I continued to suffer in silence for three weeks, being unable to stand up with the pain in my spine. I carried my son in a shawl and crept on my hands and knees all over the house. My husband was completely oblivious to it all. ‘How can he not notice?’ I asked myself over and over again. No, my husband expected me to be out on the farm the next day and working like nothing had happened. He even suggested bringing the baby into the fields in the freezing February wind and snow. He hardly spoke to me, and he never asked if I was OK, if the baby was OK, or if either of us needed anything. Despite now having a family of my own, I’d never felt more alone.

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**Solicitor:** Tell me more about Robert. What was he like as a baby?

**Catherine:** Robert did well until he was three months old, at which point he was given the three-in-one vaccine. Overnight, he turned into a screaming, crying baby who couldn’t be settled, resulting in me hardly getting any sleep for about three years. My husband didn’t seem to worry; he only cared about himself. I, however, was determined to get to the bottom of baby Robert’s problems and finally found an allergy specialist, who explained that Robert had had a traumatic birth (involving forceps and oxygen restriction), and as a consequence, was allergic to every food except brown rice, pears, vegetables and soya milk.

Unfortunately, baby Robert was always ill; his immunity was very poor, and he had to have fifteen antibiotics over a 12 month period. To be honest, I don’t know how I kept going, fitting in baby Robert along with teaching, running the house, and looking after the farm. My husband was no help; he resented the baby and all the attention he required. It was such a shame – after all, I’d always envisaged my husband and I working as a team together on everything that life threw at us, but that was never to be. He simply saw me as his possession, something that
would give him free sex and that would bring in the money he needed to live. He was a complete lounge lizard.

**Solicitor:** How were your finances back then? Were you getting along OK?

**Catherine:** Even back then, the financial control had begun, but I was blind to it. I asked my husband to post the child benefit form, but instead he got a form and applied himself. A letter came for me asking to submit mine and to sign below. I only learned recently that he lied to me, saying that I had to sign the payments over to him as the law had changed. I did question it, but I signed it anyway for a quiet life. I added him to my teaching account and the money went in there. No problem, I thought. Well, now I’ve learned that all the child allowance intended for the children was removed by him, simply because I added him to it. I also learned recently of how he’d managed to take all of my retirement money from that account and put it into his own account. I simply had no idea at the time.

I paid for everything in the new house – including the mortgage – as I was the main bread winner out of the two of us at the time. I was very innocent in that I never realised (until a solicitor pointed it out) that I was not on the title deeds for the house. Everything was in his name, but I never even thought to check or look – we were married, after all. I actually only learned about the deeds from a PI I hired in 2007.

At the time, money and deeds meant nothing to me, as I had my own money and was able to fend for myself. Then, however, I got ill, and I soon came to realise that I was just a slave to my husband, who expected me to teach and farm and raise the children, even when I wasn’t well.

When I finally collapsed from overwork, he threatened to have me committed to a mental home, as he had done with his brother.

**Solicitor:** And how did things continue on the farm?

**Catherine:** At around this time, thirteen calves died, one after the other, on the farm. Some were deformed, whereas some were born dead, and I discovered that my husband was simply throwing the dead bodies into the river – one which supplied the major nearby town with water! I was simply unable to do all of the work and I cried at the sight of the cattle left stuck in two feet of dung. You see, my husband was so lazy that he wouldn’t clean out the sheds, leaving the dung to just pile up, higher and higher, up the legs of the cattle. It was just awful, and I would cry and get so upset over seeing this animal abuse.

On one occasion, I ran down and let them all out onto the fields in the middle of winter; I cared more about them than my husband ever would. He completely neglected them. Once, a young heifer got injured, but my husband refused to get a vet to ease her pain. He just had no feeling for the animals at all. How could he – a farmer – treat his animals like this? I just couldn’t understand.

With every new day, I felt worse and worse. My husband mostly took his anger out on the animals, kicking them for simply no reason at all – this wasn’t exactly the example I wished to set for our children. I was an extremely gentle, peace-loving human being who just wanted to get on with life and provide a safe haven for my children to grow and mature in.

I wanted my children to feel safe, something which I didn’t really get to experience as a child, apart from when my dad was around. In fact, I never really felt completely
safe on this planet until I reached fifty-one years of age.

One day – completely out of the blue – I collapsed in class. I was completely worn out from all of the work and the stress of my daily life, and it all just got too much for me. I was taken home and the doctor offered me morphine and suggested that I check into hospital for three days, but this I refused as I had no one to look after Robert. I was diagnosed with a brain infection and post-traumatic stress disorder, and consequently, I wasn’t allowed back to work.

The night before that, I had completely lost track of time, and it was a strange night indeed. I came home from work late and had started to look for baby Robert, but I never got as far as the bedroom. I was walking along the hall when I felt a blow to the back of my head, and the rest of the night was a blur until the following morning.

I knew that the only other person who had been in my house was my husband, but I dared not imagine that it was him trying to kill me. However, when I look back over my time with him, there were several moments when his actions were suspicious to say the least. For instance, he never got the prescriptions for me that the doctor wrote out, and we had only just taken out a life insurance policy a few months previously. It wasn’t until my solicitor asked me about insurance policies in 2009 that I even dared to think the unthinkable.

*Solicitor: What happened after this incident? How did your husband treat you?*

*Catherine:* Back when I got ill, I was in and out of consciousness for a whole week, completely alone and with Robert to look after, who was now two years old. I had to change the bed clothes a few times each day because they were soaking wet from my fever, and never once did my husband offer to cook or clean or bring water, and he definitely didn’t offer to look after baby Robert. His main priority – as ever – was himself, and he would go to my mother’s house for dinner, or to his own mother’s house for tea, leaving me at home, hungry and alone. I do remember one act of kindness that week, but it wasn’t from him; my mother-in-law came to visit and brought me some food. All of the other days, I crawled down the hall to the kitchen and made French fries, something easy that baby Robert could eat too. I remember asking myself over and over, “How does my husband not realise how ill I am? Why does he not help with his son? How could any human being act this way?”

By this point, I was totally isolated. None of my friends or family wanted to visit because my husband would always make them feel unwelcome. He would just sit there, saying nothing, not even looking at them. I phoned my mother (which I wouldn’t do unless I felt it was an emergency), asking her to come over and help, but she refused, explaining that “it might be contagious”. I couldn’t understand how my own mother could be so cold-hearted towards me and my grandson, although of course, deep down I knew the kind of person she was, and I ought to have expected the excuses. Actually, after the shock had worn off, I was annoyed with myself for even bothering to ask her. Still, it was another wound to my soul and another part of me that I would later have to heal.

*Solicitor: What did your parents think of Robert? Did they get on with him?*

*Catherine:* My mother never really bonded with my child. She was very distant with him, but then again, she was like that with everyone. Robert was ill a lot from the vaccine
Things Go From Bad To Worse

Catherine: Things were not good. One day, I felt like I was very much on the edge of death. I was so low, and I felt like I was passing through the white light, and that I didn’t want to return to Earth. It is like the ‘tunnel’ that some people talk about, and at the end of it, you arrive at a cloudlike place of total peace.

I was over, and my aunt and dad were there to meet me. I didn’t want to come back to Earth – the pain in my head from the blow was too much. I was too tired to stay, but I did, only for the sake of Robert. I knew that I couldn’t leave him in the care of his father. Luckily, I had a friend who phoned to see how I was, and she, in turn, asked one of her other friends to call me too. This helped me get back on track, as I started to see that I wasn’t completely isolated after all.

Still, my husband continued to either not notice or not care; he would just amble off to his mother’s house for hours on end, never bothering to see if Robert and I were OK. He only returned home properly when I was able to cook again, which pretty much summed up our relationship. My friend came to visit occasionally to help out as much as he could, but as he was male, this wasn’t viewed in a positive light at all.

Personally, I had evolved past these old Irish thought patterns; after all, my father had never entertained such discrimination. Some of the teachers from where I worked visited to see how I was doing, but they never stayed for too long – my husband made sure of that with the usual uncomfortable atmosphere he tended to create.

It wasn’t, however, just the atmosphere that had put them off – I later discovered, to my absolute horror, that my husband had smeared faeces all over the bathroom toilet during their visit. Well, that sure did the trick: they never came round again. I felt ashamed, even though it

Solicitor: When did your father die? How did your mother react to this?

Catherine: After struggling with his health for many, many years, my father died in 1987. After his death, me and my mother became even more distant. For one thing, when he died, she refused to carry out his wishes regarding an Irish wake; she didn’t want people coming and dirtying her house, and she didn’t want drink in the house, either. She even banned the planned party in the hotel. So, I said I would take Dad’s body to my home and have the wake there, knowing that this would shame her into doing what she’d promised.

After the funeral, I also found out that she hadn’t honoured my Dad’s wishes in his will, and for me, that was the end. I knew then that it was all about appearances in front of our family and neighbours – that’s all she cared about, even though she’d just lost her husband.

Solicitor: Let’s get back to your time on the farm when Robert was little. How were things after your head injury?

When His Eyes Turned White
wasn’t my fault, and it took years for me to stop blaming myself for the actions of my husband. Despite these setbacks, I carried on as best I could, and I had to be helped to walk again. Later, I was diagnosed with ME/CFS (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) as well as the PTSD. This was a very dark time for me, and I spent many times under my suicide tree, wishing I could do something to get my strength back.

**Solicitor:** Tell me more about this ‘suicide tree’.

**Catherine:** This tree was near the river and I used to go and sit under it, especially after I ran away after Robert was born. I just felt so alone, with no help from my husband or anyone else. Having lost two stone during my pregnancy, I was exhausted. As my husband wasn’t getting 100% of my attention after the birth of his son, he turned nasty, and would disappear for hours, leaving me to do the farm work while carrying Robert with me in my arms. Those were roasting hot days, and as my husband hadn’t given the cows any water, they stampeded, nearly killing both myself and Robert at one point.

When things like this happened, I would sit under the tree with Robert and wish for death; I would think about the river water rising and taking us off. I went to my mother and told her about this, but all she would say was, “Well, you made your bed, now lie in it. This is a Catholic country and you know you have to endure the abuse of your husband. That’s the Catholic way.” Her words caused total despair within me: I was totally trapped on a remote farm, and no one cared. So, I would go and sit under my tree and ponder my life.

**Solicitor:** What was the next big life event for you after this?

**Catherine:** I was told by doctors that if I wanted any more children, I’d better have the last one before they performed a hysterectomy on me, and I did, indeed, decide to have another child. Soon, my daughter Emma was born, without any drugs or any complications. My only issue was the release of trauma from baby Robert’s birth on the night Emma was born. I started shaking uncontrollably, which was seen as being ‘attention seeking’ by the nurses in Dublin, but an expert clarified trauma and its effects for me years later, which put my mind at ease. I decided not to go for the hysterectomy in the end, and even decided to keep away from hospitals as much as possible. I have since learned that the doctors involved had carried out many unnecessary operations of this kind on women such as me – the surgeons make big money out of it. It’s got nothing to do with what’s best for the mother.

**Solicitor:** How did the people in your life react to your second child? Was it different to how they reacted to Robert?

**Catherine:** At this point in my life, my relationship with my mother and husband got even worse. My mother was angry that I didn’t appoint the godparents that she’d chosen for us, so on the day of Emma’s christening, my entire family shunned my new baby. They attended the ceremony, but they refused to hold her and also refused to eat or drink anything. My mother, of course, controlled the rest of my siblings, and none of them dared go against her. The atmosphere was tense, to say the least, and my family weren’t even the biggest of my worries; the priest was drunk and he baptised Emma in a fruit bowl, giving her the name ‘Rachel’. Naturally, I was shocked and deeply hurt at the grim reality of what should have been a beautiful day.
Not long after, one day – completely out of the blue – my husband announced that he didn’t want Emma anyway, as “she was a girl and useless for the farm.” Emma at this time was just three weeks old. I felt my face drop at the same time as my heart, and I remember standing at the fridge with a jug of milk in my hands, completely frozen to the spot. I just kept thinking, ‘How could anyone even think like this in the 1990s?’ Still, it was common in remote areas of Ireland back then, and it still is today.

Even in 2014, I meet mothers with daughters in Ireland who tell the same story of the fathers not wanting contact with any of ‘the useless girls’. I was extremely lucky that my own father was all about equality; he knew the old Irish way of males and females being equal, as it should be. All of my siblings were treated equally, all were educated equally, and all were loved equally. Why couldn’t my husband see that?

**Solicitor:** What were the consequences of your husband stating he didn’t want Emma?

**Catherine:** I considered leaving him, properly, for the first time. Of course, in those days the idea of separation was almost unheard of; women were supposed to stick it out no matter what, and this left me with the feeling of being completely and utterly trapped. I had given up my teaching work, and was now dependent solely on money from the farm. My original intention, as I’ve said, was to leave teaching after Robert was born and establish the guest house business that our home was specially designed for.

I put my early retirement money into the bank and kept asking my husband when the builder was coming to convert the three attic rooms into guest rooms. He kept putting it off, and even though it was a lot of money at the time, I couldn’t understand why my husband was standing in the way of progress. That guest house could have provided lifelong financial security for the both of us, so why keep putting it off?

Later on, I found out that my name wasn’t even on that account, as I thought, so I didn’t actually have access to any of my own money. My husband had even signed a cheque from my school account and put it into his own, leaving me completely cut off. I remember feeling deeply traumatised and unable to think clearly at this point – after all, I had not only the farm to look after, but also Robert and baby Emma! I had never suspected anything because the bank statements always came addressed to both me and him, whereas in reality, it was his and his mother-in-law’s names on the account. I simply trusted him too much, and it didn’t occur to me – not once – that he’d actually do something this low, especially when his own children were involved. I never saw a single penny of this money – my money – after that.

**Solicitor:** What other things was your husband doing around this time? Did his behaviour get worse?

**Catherine:** It definitely got worse – a lot worse. My husband kept me in a hostage situation. He didn’t want anyone else around the farm, and I had to beg for money every week just to buy food and clothes for the children, while he went out and ate, not bringing anything back for his family. It was around this time that he started doing strange things, apparently to try and break my spirit. For instance, he would drain all of the oil out of the tank, thereby leaving the house with no heating. I just couldn’t even begin to understand this behaviour (especially when he had young children to think about) so one day I asked...
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him about all of his recent strange actions. He responded that it was my punishment for not asking his permission to retire from teaching, and I pointed out that it had been our agreement far before we’d got married to each other. He ignored my reply and carried on with the strange behaviour. For one thing, he began burying money in jars in the garden, and he would also tell Robert that I was mad and that I would be sent away to the mental home.

Robert, understandably, became very upset upon hearing this, thinking that I’d be locked away and that he would be left alone with his father. At the time, he was eight years old and Emma was four, so at least she was too young to understand. It was all because I was ill and not able to return to teaching, even though my husband felt I should go back. I was deemed a ‘useless cow’ that would, on the farm, be put down.

He’d already had his brother committed; it was how men in power did things, and it’s still done today. It goes back to the Magdalene days of locking away disobedient women. All it would have taken was one phone call, and with the help of the Roman Catholic doctor, he could have had me committed. Unless you have first-hand experience, no one really understands the patriarchal power over women in Ireland. I went into the marriage blind in this way, as my own father had been totally different. I expected all men to be loving and caring and helpful, but my marriage soon opened my eyes to what it was really like.

Whenever my mother came by (which wasn’t often), my husband acted like the perfect father, taking his daughter onto his lap as if he always acted that way around her. In 2008, Emma actually told me that her father had not earned the title of ‘Dad’ – he was a mere sperm donor. Looking back, it is so painfully easy to see the truth about him, but at the time I was somewhat blind, confused, and tired, and in complete denial at all the turmoil I was going through. I wasn’t someone who made mistakes, and yet I’d voluntarily married this man and had his children! The guilt just kept on coming; I was ashamed, because at that time the breakup of a marriage was always seen as being the woman’s fault. Simply put, women were – and still are – the scapegoats of Irish society. In fact, Irish women were blamed for almost everything in their home country, and thanks to the Catholic indoctrination, they were often seen as being evil. The poor men could never be blamed, could they? As I found out during my own wedding day, women were looked upon as possessions once they were married.

It wasn’t legal to get a divorce in Ireland until 1997, and even then it was carefully calculated to be incredibly difficult – most women of age forty and above simply wouldn’t be able to leave their husbands due to financial reasons. So, even with it becoming legal, it was almost impossible for a woman to divorce a man unless she had her own money to support herself for four years or so. Back when I was married, women were brought up to put everyone else before themselves, or they would risk being labelled as selfish, while others reminded them of their place in the patriarchal system: men first, children second, women last.

In terms of my own marriage, things went from bad to worse, with the children and I being very unhappy at the farm. My husband was becoming increasingly aggressive towards me, especially as he now had to actually do some work on the farm himself. The bank account that I had set up for the children’s education was completely cleared out without a word. It was just one thing after another.

Solicitor: So when did things start to change? The thought of leaving him had already occurred to you, but what happened to convince you that this would be the best thing to do?
**Catherine:** One day, something happened which I simply could not ignore. I saw my husband kick Emma in the lower spine and knock her to the ground, for no reason whatsoever; she was simply ‘in his way’, as he saw it, and he kicked her like he did the dogs and the cows. She was just three years old. Another day, I arrived home from shopping to find Robert – now six years old – almost frozen solid out in the field, pulling up vegetables while my husband was drinking tea inside in the warmth. It was like one shock after another – no one does that to a child!

I found myself questioning my sanity over and over again; could the man I loved be capable of all of these nasty actions? Bells were finally beginning to ring in my head now, louder than ever before, and I knew I had to get out before it was too late – for me and for my children. When people say that children must come first, I now believe the opposite; the mother must come first, and be in a good condition mentally, physically and emotionally, in order for the entire family to benefit. Of course, generally, this isn’t the way people think.

One of our mutual friends pointed out to both of us that things would simply have to change, and that my husband would have to make more of an effort to bond with his children, but he didn’t see it this way at all. He felt that it was the mother’s role to do all of that, because that’s what his own mother had done when he was young. It was so ingrained in him that one day, he came into the kitchen (when we had visitors) and was horrified that dinner wasn’t on the table at six, as usual. He sat down and began banging his knife and fork on the table hard – tap tap tap – while giving me a threatening look at the same time. I felt so embarrassed in front of my friends; I was still blaming myself for not seeing my husband’s true colours before I married him. I still thought of it as being my fault.

Another day, my husband stormed out because, again, dinner was running late and he came back into the house with his mentally ill brother. His brother had a loaded shotgun in his hands and was pointing it at Robert, who was then nine years old. My husband was cunning enough not to bring the gun in himself, at least. Poor Robert ran up the hall, completely terrified out of his mind. A friend of mine asked them to get out and take the gun with them, which they eventually did. This incident, unsurprisingly, has affected Robert ever since; the sight of a gun will trigger the memory instantly, and he has been opposed to guns his entire life. I suppose that’s one positive thing that has come out of such a terrible time.

I now know that this is a common scenario among abusers and their victims; society loves blaming the victims too. People think, “Surely I knew the man I married? How could I not?” and, “Why didn’t I just leave?” I learned from a psychologist in 2013 in the UK that society keeps the light shining on the female victims of domestic terrorism and therefore off the perpetrators themselves – it was a relief to know this. It hadn’t just been happening to me and me alone.

Another incident that I just couldn’t get over occurred when I left Emma alone with her father when she was just two and a half years old. One of my friends had suggested doing this in an attempt to let them bond, but when I came home, I found them in a sexually compromising position. The room was all blacked out, even though it was daylight, and I felt that something was wrong, but I never expected that kind of abuse. I didn’t say anything to anyone; I couldn’t even speak for three whole days.

From that day onwards, I never once left Emma alone with her biological father, and I became very angry with the friend who had suggested leaving them alone together.
in the first place. I hadn’t felt completely comfortable with it at the time, but I had decided to give my husband the benefit of the doubt and allow him some bonding time with his daughter. After that, I wasn’t going to give him any more chances ever again.

One day, years later, one of my friends noted the energy mark on Emma’s body and asked me if I was aware of what happened. This is a trauma mark that only some people can see, and Emma was ten years old at the time. I’d been denying it to myself all those years because I felt guilty for not protecting her and for going against my own gut. My husband didn’t want Emma anyway and I was prepared to be both mother and father to her, like my own father had been to me. When the woman mentioned the energy mark to me, I knew I would have to finally face the truth. Before that, I’d tried to convince myself that it had never happened. It was just wishful thinking, however, and the reality finally kicked in. Once I’d said it out loud, it was the confirmation I needed – that it had actually happened and that it was terribly, terribly wrong.

**Solicitor:** So did you leave after all of these horrible incidents?

**Catherine:** I really, really wanted to leave at that point, but as I had nowhere else to go, I stayed. I was in an almost frozen state of shock, but I was determined to make my plans to escape. Years later, a specialist in London asked what traumatic event had occurred in my past that left me in my stone-like state. I hadn’t even realised other people saw me like this; it didn’t even occur to me that they could see me in my true state. After much hesitation, I explained about the sexual incident between my husband and daughter, and how I’d just frozen at the time. I had been secretly blaming myself for years, but it was my psychol-ogist who made me see that the actions of the perpetrator were not my responsibility.

As the days and nights passed, my husband became more and more sullen. He would just sit on the sofa for hours like a lounge lizard, staring at me in an intimidating manner. One very vivid memory I have from that time is of his eyes, and back then I found it extremely difficult to articulate just how his eyes made me feel.

Years later, this changed, when a professional helped me describe it: it is the same feeling one gets when a dog turns on the white of his eye before biting and attacking. I’d been made to feel like an idiot when trying to describe this to social workers and probation officers before – if I’d known to compare his expression to the ‘mad’ eyes of a dog before an attack, I could have saved myself so much hassle and abuse. I found it extremely difficult to understand that these professionals were assessing me in relation to domestic violence but that they didn’t even have the appropriate vocabulary (when compared with the social workers in the women’s refuge). Clearly, the other people I came into contact with either weren’t trained, or they were encouraged to protect the perpetrators and punish the victims, Irish style.

I endured his intimidating eyes and sullen mood for days. Then, days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months, as I pondered what to do. Where would I go? Who would take me in? My mother had made her feelings on the matter perfectly clear: leaving my husband was not an option in Roman Catholic Ireland. I would be bringing shame on my family. The neighbours would hear all about it. I made my bed when I married him and now I had to lie in it. It was what she always told me. It didn’t matter one iota that her daughter and her grandchildren were suffering; it was more important to keep the abuse hidden, as
it had been when I was younger, with my brother. I found it extremely hard to accept that my own mother was aiding and abetting the perpetrator, but I later found out that this is still a common pattern in Ireland, so I wasn’t the only one by any means.

Even though I’d already decided to leave – for both my own safety and the safety of my children – my husband and I decided to take the advice of a professional friend and spend the weekend alone, while the children were staying with some friends. My fears were confirmed when I realised that my husband only wanted sex and that he had absolutely no intention of working things out between us. When he pinned me in the corner of the kitchen and tried to force sex on me, I knew I had to leave, and when I saw the white eyes glaring at me, I made a run for it. By now, things were getting extremely dangerous, and escape was my number one priority. It was all I thought about.

Catherine: It was one of my friends who suggested that I go to the women’s refuge and seek advice, and that’s exactly what I did. I was delighted that the women there identified all of the different kinds of abuse I’d been suffering – they not only understood what I’d been going through, but they could verbalise it as well. It was only when I started working with the refuge social worker (for hours and hours) that I began to realise just how much danger I was in. Everything became frighteningly clear then. What really opened my eyes was when the social worker documented all of the facts for me, writing them down on paper where I couldn’t get away from them.

These included:
• My husband doesn’t want anything to do with our daughter because she would be of no use on the farm.
• He forced his own son to work outside in the cold while he sat in a warm house.
• He kicked the children and animals in temper, making no distinction between them.
• He didn’t want the children around at all, calling them a ‘nuisance’.
could verbalise what I’d been trying to say for so long – and that they actually believed me – was such a relief.

The social worker and Domestic Violence Advisor didn’t think that a refuge was the best place for children to be – unless there was nowhere else to go – and my friend said we could live with him until the separation came through, as he had a big house.

I assumed that the court would decide to give me the house at home (as I paid most of the mortgage on it) and that my husband could return to the home house (there were two houses on the farm). After going to a solicitor for legal advice, I was advised against moving back as my husband still had the gun in his possession. However, as time went on, I discovered that the house was legally part of the farm, and in the eyes of the law, I would be seen as depriving him of his business if I moved back there.

It became increasingly obvious to me that the law in Ireland was designed to favour the father and not the mother or children. Recently, I have worked with other professionals, learning that mothers were never entitled to custody of their children under patriarchy. In fact, all Irish women were deemed feeble-minded in the eyes of the law and that this mind-set is taught to judges, court agents, social workers, and so on.

**Solicitor:** What happened next? Did you do what you were advised to do?

**Catherine:** At the time, I was quite happy living in my friend’s house, as he travelled a lot and only really used it for business meetings. I was basically house-sitting for him. The children attended the local school, which was very small and friendly, and both my son and daughter loved the house, their school, the community atmosphere,
Of course, if all of this was happening now, I would record it all and use it as ammunition for the courts, but I wasn’t that strong then and I was only ever thinking of the children. So, I went with my gut and didn’t return home ever again. I left everything behind – they were only material possessions anyway. In the eyes of the law, I had deserted my husband, so I was the Eve ill one again.

Solicitor: What did you do in terms of getting legal advice at this time?

Catherine: With the children now safely settled in school, I had more free time for myself, and so I decided to go for full legal advice. One day, however, a very angry woman – completely out of the blue – phoned the school and announced that I was involved in some kind of cult. This shocked me, as the only cult I was involved with was the Catholic Church, and that was only because I had to be part of it for the children’s sake at school; Catholic schools rarely took children of other religions, but Protestant schools would take Catholic children. Fortunately, the teacher didn’t believe this woman; he knew that some of my friends were non-Roman Catholics and that the cult accusation was simply a religious bias towards non-Catholics. This particular teacher was always commenting on the narrow-mindedness of the people in the area, so at least I had someone on my side. I never did find out who the woman was who’d put the call in.

Just before Christmas in 1994, I visited the women’s refuge again, and this time a social worker suggested that I seek a barring order and a maintenance order. The barring order would make sure that my husband couldn’t come to the house I was staying in – he couldn’t approach me or bully me in any way. The maintenance order was to
make sure that we had enough money for things like food and clothes. I still had no access to my own money, and because of the value of the property, I wasn’t entitled to any benefits. Maintenance was the only solution. So, I went to court, only to find out that the social worker hadn’t entered the required paperwork, and when I spoke with the judge, he recommended a judicial separation. My social worker again let me down by failing to turn up for the next appointment, and this left me with no proper legal advice.

Solicitor: So what happened next? Tell me about the court process you went through.

Catherine: Well, to start with, I didn’t realise how long the process would be, just to gain protection for myself and my children; nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to witness. In 2014, I learned – as an advocate – that the same pattern is used worldwide, which came as something of a shock. I probably wouldn’t have believed it if I hadn’t lived through it myself. Basically, I felt like I was being abused by the very system that claimed to be protecting my children and myself.

I can recall the victim blaming, the use of mental torture, the untruths, the perjury and the financial abuse I suffered, all at the hands of this ‘system’. In fact, the whole process was just a mere extension of the abuse I’d been enduring for years at home at the hands of my husband.

When I left my home and came forward about my problems, I naïvely believed I was free from all the abuse, but no one warned me about the punishments that were inflicted on abused mothers and their children; if they had, I don’t think I’d have left. I would never have entered the lion’s den court system, either, where I was ripped apart at each hearing and during every single assessment.
**Solicitor:** Take me back to the start. What was your first court appearance like?

**Catherine:** I wanted to get things moving before Christmas, so I went to see a (female) solicitor. She turned up two hours late, meaning that the consultation was only a short one, so it wasn’t the best of starts. Still, when the day of the court case came, I was pretty confident; I thought it would be relatively simple. I had placed my trust in my solicitor, but on the morning of my hearing, she again turned up late, looking completely scatter-brained. All of the male solicitors were laughing at her, and this was a new experience for me, as I hadn’t realised that sexism existed in the legal profession as well.

Anyway, my solicitor dashed off across the room to speak to my husband’s solicitor, returning moments later and announcing that everything was sorted; she’d done a deal with them. I hadn’t instructed her to make any deals with the perpetrator and his solicitor whatsoever, and I became annoyed at this behaviour. However, I later learned that this type of wheeling and dealing was very common, as it was an easy way for the solicitors not to have to argue their cases in front of the judge.

When I questioned my solicitor about this, she explained that she was very nervous of this particular judge, as he was very sarcastic and he was known to ‘rip women apart’, including female solicitors. She didn’t tell me the details of the deal she’d made; it was like I had no voice and wasn’t allowed any kind of opinion on the matter.

When it was time for the court case to be heard, I could see just how scared my solicitor was. Even though I didn’t want my children to have any contact with their father at all, she explained to me that fathers always get contact with their children, even if they abused them. I was very unlucky to get this particular judge, she went on to explain, as not only did he not like women, but he was also ‘sick to fucking death’ of hearing about abuse cases, and always got angry when he was presented with one, taking his irritation out on the solicitors.

Because of this, my solicitor told me that in order to spare herself the anger from the judge, she would not be taking my instruction to inform the judge of the domestic violence and child abuse we’d suffered at the hands of my husband. I couldn’t believe it. I was shocked and speechless, and all I could think about was how I was letting my children down. I’d promised them that they were safe, and now it wasn’t even going to be brought up before a judge. At this point, Robert was nine and Emma was four.

My solicitor had also forgotten to enter the maintenance summons, so that part of the case couldn’t proceed either. I had to ask myself what kind of solicitor I’d hired, and by this point I was completely disillusioned with the justice system. I learned that the court system is nothing more than a business with the main aim of making a profit. The solicitors were all players and my husband and I were mere pawns in the game, with no actual say at all. It was a total deception. Win or lose, my solicitor would get paid, and it was all about money and nothing to do with the protection of me or my children. I could see that in her face, and definitely in her actions, both before the court hearing and during it.

**Solicitor:** What were the consequences of this first court hearing?

**Catherine:** In the end, my husband was granted access without even a single assessment. In the eyes of the law, he had rights, no matter what he’d done to us in the past.
No one in the legal profession actually cared about the safety of the children; they were just expected to obey in the old patriarchal way and plod along, straight into the danger. The judge actually told me that I’d have to drag them there by their hair if necessary.

As my husband had been granted visitation rights, I asked the children to go and meet him, but they refused, with Robert becoming visibly distressed. When I told him that it was an order from the judge, he didn’t believe it, wanting to speak to the judge first himself.

I went to meet my husband alone, but I had two friends close by, just in case anything happened. My husband explained to me that he himself hadn’t asked for access to the children, but that his lawyer had made him do it in order to look good in front of the judge. He explained to me that he wouldn’t have a clue what to do with the children anyway, and that when he had them, I’d have to help him and come with him during the contact sessions. Needless to say, this wasn’t what I wanted; I just kept thinking, ‘How am I ever going to be free?’ Then the famous words came from my husband’s lips, the ones that seared through my heart, right through to my very soul: “See, you can never escape me; the law is always on my side.” His solicitor had made him wise to this, and I hated him for it.

**Solicitor:** What was your next step after meeting with your husband?

**Catherine:** When I returned home to my children, they were glad that I was safe, and I told them they wouldn’t have to meet up with their father, which they were very relieved about. My next step was to go to a community welfare officer, who advised me to take out a maintenance summons myself, without the help of a solicitor. Although this was a whole new world to me, I could see that it made sense, as he also pointed out that my solicitor – along with all the other female solicitors in the area – was afraid of the judge. I, however, had nothing to be afraid of, as I had done nothing wrong or illegal.

It was at this point that my solicitor informed me of what my husband was saying: he swore that he couldn’t afford any maintenance for the children at all. In my mind, all I could see were the jars of money that he’d buried in the garden, as well as the fact that my own money was now controlled by him. He had the money, he just had no intention of using it to support me or the children, while I was trying to get by on hand-outs and helpful friends. Eventually, he agreed to a small amount, but only on the condition that I returned to the house each week to collect it. I always hated going there to pick it up; the house had turned into a complete pigsty, and the shotgun was always in full view as I entered the door. Every time I had to go there, it broke away a bit more of my soul.

**Solicitor:** How were the children taking the whole process at this point?

**Catherine:** It was December now, and instead of thinking about my husband, I tried to focus on giving the children the most joyous Christmas imaginable; after all, this was their first Christmas without their father, and therefore, their first Christmas without fear. They could finally play and laugh and have friends over without their father muddying the energy around them. There would be no father snarling at them for having fun, and there’d definitely be no kicking or other form of abuse. They would be warm with heating, and they would receive presents and feel free to play with them. Robert would not be forced to work...
outside in the cold while his father sat idly inside, drinking tea. It was a good time.

Of course, after Christmas, it was back to reality, and when I met my solicitor, she delivered another bombshell. She told me that the judge would jail me for not forcing the children to attend contact with their father. She explained that the judge didn’t care if I had to drag them there by their hair, I just had to obey the order, otherwise I would go to jail. I couldn’t believe my ears. I was totally speechless. What would happen to the children then? Who would keep them safe? To the judge, this clearly wasn’t as important as the father having the right to see them. So, it seemed that court-ordered abuse was the norm. I couldn’t get my head around it. Any of it.

Sadly, this was true then and it still is now. It’s no wonder, really, that Ireland has such a view on children and that they adhere to total obedience to the father, no matter what the consequences. Father’s rights would trump child protection every time. In that moment, I clearly saw how Hitler’s ‘best interest of the child’ energy signature was used in the same way with the Nazis. It was about using the children to make money – by any means possible – and keeping control in the hands of the fathers. In law, the children were his possessions.

I then had another meeting with a social worker in the women’s refuge, who agreed with me that the father shouldn’t have any access to the children whatsoever, as he had no parental interest in them, was totally negligent, and was also completely irresponsible. Of course, this was all new to me, and incredibly stressful. I was trying to look after the children, recover from the shock of the violence and abuse, and sort out the legal end of things, all at the same time. It was daunting, to say the least, and matters were made even worse due to everyone around me being so incompetent. It all just seemed to be a game to the agents of the court corporation, and it was definitely all about the money. Victims simply meant that there were jobs for the people in the various state agencies, and that’s all we were to them. Money.

Everyone knew (the agents of the court as much as the solicitors, who solicit business for it) that there was profit in dragging out a case, and it became increasingly obvious to me that this was what they were doing. They knew that caring, protective mothers like me would fight to the death in order to protect their children from abuse and harm. They knew it, and they took advantage of it.

Later that day, I visited the Welfare Officer, who suggested that I get a house of my own. This was because the court system wasn’t capable of believing that I could live with a male friend (which I was doing at the time) without having an affair, even if he was twice my age. On the other hand, if I stayed with another woman, I would be labelled as a lesbian, which wouldn’t help my case, either. It was just ludicrous. The male friend I refer to passed away in 1997 but the court papers cite an affair at that time. While an affair with a dead man is cause for laughter now, it certainly wasn’t back then.
I laugh at how naïve I was then, compared to how I am now. I walked into the legal arena believing in justice and came away knowing that justice is just a myth in Ireland. I decided to go for my own house, but the judge had to grant a maintenance order to make sure there was proof for a new landlord. I still had no access to my own money and no one in the court seemed to care. Some days it seemed that no one anywhere cared. In my heart, I thought that I would be getting my own home back as I had paid for it anyway. That would be what would happen if the legal system was fair, anyway. I quickly learned that the law does not operate on a human level.

I then paid a visit to the probation officer, who kindly offered to guide me through the entire process, but as with the things I’d had to suffer through with the legal system before, this was also a trap. And so I took another trip into the spider’s web. The probation officer was offering assistance which, at the time, I took to be genuine. I felt like there was no reason why I shouldn’t trust this person, and yet it turned out to be the worst thing that could have happened to me. I was, however, too traumatised and ill to know any different at the time.

**Solicitor:** When were you next in court?

**Catherine:** A week or so later, I went to court again and was asked to take the children with me, as the judge wished to speak to them in his chambers. Robert was delighted and really wanted to speak to this judge himself, as he’d said before. I made it into an exciting day out, trying to hide my fear of what might happen.

All went very well and the children were not scared at all, and the judge remarked that the children were extremely articulate and well mannered. Robert even told the judge that he did not wish to see his father ever again, and when asked how he would react if he was told that his father had died, he replied that he would jump up and down with joy. I didn’t learn this until 2012 when I saw the court papers – there is actually a statement stating that Robert would jump and ‘dance up and down with joy if his father died’. In Robert’s mind, he would rather have committed suicide than see his father, or he felt he would kill his father if he had to, in order to protect Emma and himself. Needless to say, he felt very strongly about this. In light of his reaction, the judge ordered that there should be no contact for the time being.

While this should have been a point to celebrate, nothing, of course, ever goes that smoothly. The probation officer agreed that my children were well mannered, but he thought that they were unnaturally well mannered and well spoken. I was unaware at the time, but this probation officer had just been to a conference on Parental Alienation Syndrome, and had come back having been groomed to see all mothers as alienators. Suddenly, the abuse and violence issues were put on the back burner and I was apparently now at fault for failing my children.

**Solicitor:** Tell me more about how this ‘Parental Alienation Syndrome’ affected your case.

**Catherine:** The notion of Parental Alienation came from an alleged pro-paedophile psychiatrist in the USA called Richard Gardner. Like with the Satanic Ritual Abuse program, this probation officer felt that he was in the know, especially after attending this conference. Of course, these days the PAS theory isn’t allowed into court proceedings in most countries, and if that probation officer met my children today, he would be more than a little surprised.
Back then, however, he insisted that our case should be referred to the probation services for reports, a department where he was the main controller. In fact, it was later pointed out to me (by a solicitor) that this same probation officer controlled the entire court system, so it was for this reason that the judge didn’t dare go against him. I didn’t know this at the time, but everyone else did.

Asking probation officers and social workers to do assessments was quite common then, despite the fact that most of these people were not trained in domestic violence and all of its dynamics. They were simply told to go on a one day course and then they claimed to be experts. I, on the other hand, had spent months studying domestic violence in University and knew all about the wheel of abuse. A one day course in domestic terrorism does not make these agents of the court experts. In fact, years later, real experts – like Barry Goldstein, Charles Pragnell and Phyllis Chesler – confirmed that I was correct in pointing out their lack of proper training. The women in the refuge knew their facts, too. The judge, however, simply accepted the word of the probation officers and social workers as gospel, making orders based on their findings. It is sad but true, and unfortunately it still goes on today.

**Solicitor:** Let’s get back to your solicitor. How was she finding the proceedings at this point?

**Catherine:** The solicitor was so afraid of the probation officer that it all seemed so unnatural to me. She actually quivered in his presence! Again, I was very naïve, believing that this was a court that delivered justice to all people. How wrong I was. Of course, I have since discovered that there are thousands of people just like me who went through the same things and suffered exactly the same set-backs. Still, being told that this judge just accepted the word of a probation officer seemed very unreal to me, and the fact that the judge didn’t do any real work himself just seemed perverse. I wondered at the time if the judge wasn’t simply lazy, finding it easier to pass the buck to probation officers, social workers, and guardians.

**Solicitor:** And what about this judge? What did he say at this point?

**Catherine:** At this point, the judge seemed to turn on me, losing his temper seemingly because I was sitting there making notes throughout the procedure. He totally lost the plot right there in front of me, telling me that he didn’t care if I had to walk the streets; I wasn’t getting any maintenance and that was that. This was so frustrating to me – after all, I was only asking for my own hard-earned money back, which was now locked up in my husband’s account. I got told to ‘be a good girl and go home and obey your husband. You ought to know your place by now in this Roman Catholic country.”

I was considered a bold girl for not going home and obeying my abusive husband. That is what was expected of me then; I was nothing in the eyes of the judge, just a breeder for the patriarchal system. This was the Catholic teaching for so long, and as it was passed down from mother to daughter, it seemed like it would just continue forever. I was trying to break the cycle, so I had to be punished; protective mothers like me were seen as a threat to the system. I was just glad to be out of that court session.

**Solicitor:** And what happened next?

**Catherine:** That evening, I was lucky enough to meet with
a recently qualified female police officer, who was specially trained in the domestic violence unit. She was just wonderful; she understood the whole system and explained to me how the deck was stacked against female victims. She also explained how my husband would react to each step along the way and she was correct. She went on to tell me that correct profiling of the perpetrator was the key to safety.

At this point, I was living alone in the house with just the children, and on several occasions a car would drive up to the house at night and then speed off. The police officer explained to me that this was normal when a husband knows that his victims live alone. She was livid that our address was given to my husband by the court judge, and she also explained that most violent husbands make every step of the process into a complete nightmare for their victims and children. The fact that these husbands were even helped by their own solicitors and social workers was very disheartening indeed.

Solicitor: What happened when you were next at court?

Catherine: A few days later, there was another hearing in the Circuit Court regarding money that was owed to me from my husband. Once again, I paid for a barrister who failed to show up in time for the hearing, and who later brushed me off by saying, “Oh, you would have lost anyway”. My solicitor also showed up two hours late. There wasn’t a single mention of the thousands of pounds I had paid them to represent me, no apologies, nothing.

Oddly enough, I was never even called into the court for the hearing, but my husband was; he went in the judge’s entrance and came out grinning at me like a Cheshire cat. I remember staring at him in surprise, wondering to myself, ‘Who is this husband of mine, who had such top clearance?’ I was beginning to see over and over again that this was nothing more than a money racket and that it depended heavily on what gender you were and on who you knew. The old boys’ club was alive and well, and the official procedures were simply not followed.

Finally, the day of the first assessment – with the probation officer – came and I felt very confident, as this was my chance, at last, to let the truth be known. As usual,
there was a mix-up with times and appointment cards being sent to the wrong address, but luckily I phoned to double check, as the appointment had been changed. I was to learn this was also a pattern in the system, with victims being blamed for not showing up, so I’d decided to keep track of the details; by this point, I was documenting and recording absolutely everything. The keeping of this contemporaneous diary has meant that I can write this book verbatim.

From the moment I entered the room, it was obvious that this probation officer had already made up his mind; he was a moody, red-faced, bad-tempered, filthy, dirty being. He had interviewed my husband just beforehand, and this was something that kept recurring. In fact, I remember very well that he was always interviewed first and I was told on many occasions, “It is OK, we have the whole story from your husband”. This was incredibly frustrating, to say the least; while my husband got an hour to put across his side of the story, I got about ten minutes. Three lines is all the officer wrote on his page to record what I’d said. I even made a remark about this to the officer, querying why he’d made no notes from my side of the story. I was told that he didn’t need to; he had all the information for the court. I was clearly just another feeble-minded Irish mother.

So, I was suddenly a member of a cult, a paedophile ring, and a Mafia member. It’s easy to laugh about it now, of course; after all, if I actually was a member of any of these organisations, I would have been taken care of and so would the others! I was also accused of being an alcoholic and of spending £400 of my husband’s money every week on alcohol. That was also laughable as he only gave me £60 a week. Somehow, the maths didn’t add up! At that time, I was, in fact, only getting some of my own money back from my retirement fund, which my husband had manipulated into his sole control.

When I made a complaint regarding the fact that no one was recording my side of the story, the officer became very aggressive towards me, screaming and shouting, “Come back when you have two black eyes! Do you realise that this is holy Catholic Ireland, and that this department does not approve of separation? Go home, my girl, and obey your husband.” Then, by now clearly red with rage, he terminated the interview, telling me that he was fed up. I couldn’t believe it.

Solicitor: How did you feel at this point?

Catherine: Well, it was now crystal clear to me that the Roman Catholic Church controlled the court system and that women were expected to continue obeying their violent husbands in accordance with the teachings of St Augustine. These teachings proclaim that husbands have a duty to beat their wives for not obeying them, and that violence and suffering is good for the woman’s soul. As I’ve mentioned, suffering was supposed to bring women closer to the invisible man in the sky, who claims to love everyone on the one hand and then punishes them on the other.

I went home completely devastated and wrote a formal letter of complaint to the officer at this so-called Department of Justice. I just had to get my feelings out of me and recorded down on paper – after all, no one else was doing that! I also researched cults in the village and found mention of one in the local paper from the previous week – somehow, the probation officer had assumed this was me and our friends. I had never heard of them before and never even knew where the house was, but of course, the
The officer eventually agreed that my husband should have no contact with the children – yet. He also stated that, “The father of the children would not be able to tell the difference between his own children and two black children.” Of course, I considered this to be a bit racist, but this was quite common in Ireland, where there aren’t many ethnic minorities and as most people are only used to white Catholics. It was arranged for the next day that the probation officer would call round our house, both to see where the children lived and to speak to them in their own environment, where hopefully they’d feel more comfortable.

**Solicitor:** How did you prepare for this house call?

**Catherine:** I tried to make the occasion into a fun one, as if it was just another visitor to the house, and being children, they were excited to show off the cakes they had made. The officer, however, never turned up. I called his office to enquire if he was on the way, and his excuse was that he’d got lost and that he would call the following day. But, of course, the following day came and went too, without a single sighting of the officer.

It got to the point where I also invited the judge to come to the house and see for himself. Robert remarked on how typical of men that was – breaking promises all the time – and it occurred to me just how much he was taking from my whole experience of attending court.

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**Solicitor:** How did the assessments go?

**Catherine:** At my interview, the officer complained to me that I had shared what he’d said about obeying my husband with the women at the refuge. The advocate in the refuge had actually called this officer, complaining about the way he was mistreating me. I was asked to confirm it and had simply told the truth.

Robert, as I’d guessed he would, refused to see his father at all, calling him a “selfish, smelly pig”. When my husband was brought into the room, I calmly asked him to explain his accusations regarding being a Mafia member, a cult member, and a member of some kind of paedophile ring, especially when he knew it was all completely untrue.

His only response was unnerving and chilling; he made his hands into the shape of a gun and pointed it at me, making a ‘bang’ sound. After all his lies, his true colours were now coming to light, and the officer saw his gesture, causing him to caution him. Unfortunately, it was one step forwards and two steps backwards again: although he cautioned him, it was never officially recorded for the court judge.

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The crazy thing was, despite the fact that this officer had never seen or visited the house at all, he delivered a full written report to the court describing the children’s welfare and the state of the house. I was completely livid – it was perjury. The children were also upset; although I’d said that this officer was just a visitor to keep it stress-free, they had baked cakes as they always did for visitors and
were annoyed when no one turned up. Anyway, the officer told the judge that he had visited the home and had seen the children, but he didn’t say anything specific about that part, he just changed the topic back to his cult idea (as he’d been to a ‘cult conference’ a few weeks earlier). I’d asked him about this conference as I already knew how Satanic Ritual Abuse started with a conference, and it’s the same today with witch conferences.

**Solicitor:** What did the officer say in his report about the house?

**Catherine:** I’ve never received a copy of this report, so I don’t know what it said, and when I asked the probation officer about it in 1995, he told me that if I ever dared to attempt to get a copy, there would be a fire. I found this odd, of course, but didn’t pursue it until 2009, when I tried to get hold of the report. I was told that there had indeed been a fire in their office in 2005 and that all of my files got burned – incidentally, this was the same year that the probation officer had retired. Coincidence or not?

During my research, I found a study by Professor Ireland regarding guardians and social workers who write reports without ever visiting the house they were supposed to see. Just as long as they get paid – that’s all they care about. No one ever dares question them as they are untouchable. All that I went through and everything that I experienced is happening today in the UK and Ireland in secret, and people find it difficult to believe because of the ‘in camera’ rule – where people are not allowed to know. If parents tell others about it outside of the court and they, in turn, speak about it, they get sent to jail.

After this, the judge stated that he thought my male friend had too much influence over the children, and in the court’s eyes, my friend was suddenly a cult member as well. It was completely ridiculous, although of course, at the time it wasn’t funny at all. The judge even refused to grant me any maintenance, as he thought my friend would end up spending it. He shouted at me to, “Walk the streets for all I care!” At this point, I began writing down what the judge was saying for my records, and he suddenly lost the plot; he was ranting and raving and commanding me to put my pen down. He told me that I wasn’t to tell anyone what he just said, and that if I obeyed him, I’d get three months ‘inside’ for contempt of court.

**Solicitor:** How did you respond to all of this?

**Catherine:** When I witnessed the perjury and the non-disclosure of the reports to my solicitor, I knew that article 6 had been breached, so I told the judge that I would notify the Strasbourg court of this breach of human rights. Well, he freaked out and completely lost the plot, ordering me to put down my pen and not write a single word of what he said – otherwise he would jail me indefinitely. When I objected, saying that he didn’t have the power to do that, he said that he could, and I believe that he would have done so if I hadn’t promised him that I wouldn’t contact Strasbourg. Of course, he had my children as the bargaining chip – if I went to jail, the children would have gone into corporate care. Later on, in 2009, I used the case law from Strasbourg and got copies of all the reports (except the burned one), even though it took me a whole three years to get them. This was with the help of a retired child protection expert and a criminologist, and the reports went straight to the Attorney General.

Back then, I innocently thought that the ‘in camera’ rule meant that all proceedings were recorded. I learned that
by their husbands, and with children obeying without question. This also had the benefit – in the system’s eyes – of saving court time and cutting down the number of separations, which also benefitted the Catholic Church. After all, the Roman Catholic Church liked to boast about all of the whole, happy marriages within its cult.

Solicitor: What was the next thing you had to do?

Catherine: Next on the list were the psychiatric reports. These were arranged for both me and my husband, and again I was the last to see the psychiatrist, having been kept waiting for two hours. After my wait, I was then told that the psychiatrist was over time, so I didn’t have as long to talk as my husband had. It was the same old story as with the courts; the psychiatrist had heard it all from my ex, and the main thing I remember from my ‘assessment’ was the psychiatrist puffing cigarette smoke directly into my face for thirty minutes in a completely intimidating manner. His menacing eyes were constantly looking down on me, as if I was ‘just a woman’ and therefore nothing… just meaningless. I decided not to get angry, though, and all I wrote in my diary for that day was, “Are these people professionals at all?”

I thought that I really ought to see their qualifications on paper, to make sure, especially as I knew that psychiatry was ‘quack science’ and that psychiatrists weren’t trained in domestic violence at all. In fact, the old church notion that all Irish women were feeble-minded was strongly ingrained in this psychiatrist’s mind as well.

Solicitor: How were the children coping at that point?

Catherine: The pressure of it all was getting to Robert and
I had more problems at my next court appearance; as my solicitor told me she couldn’t face the judge that day, I had to have another solicitor sent to me by the firm. I assumed that the first solicitor knew she couldn’t browbeat me into playing court games anymore; she knew I was traumatised by the whole thing, but she could clearly see that I wasn’t ready to be destroyed completely.

I had brought with me a number of people as witnesses – professional people from all over the world who were all prepared to come into court to show the judge who they were. I had met a lot of them through my Japanese friends and through other friends, while some of them were business people who were also assisting me in getting my guest house business up and running, as well as helping me by introducing me to prospective guests for the future. As I had taught in a multi-denominational school in Dublin, I knew a lot of people from other countries through my job, some of them in high positions. A lot of high ranking people also came to Ireland seeking advice from my Japanese friend, and they often stayed with me, meaning that I got to know them pretty well.

I was surprised to see so many of my friends turn up in court to support me, especially some of the worldwide professionals. I later learned that one of my Irish friends had informed them of my situation and they had all got together to assist me. They all found it incredibly hard to believe what was happening to me, especially in terms of the religious control. When the judge ordered them out of his court because they were non-Roman Catholic – and therefore in some weird cult – I was speechless. I was completely embarrassed to be Irish and the words the judge used to describe them still haunt me to this day. He was screaming like a Bean Sidhe (or banshee), no disrespect to the Bean Sidhe
of course. He was completely out of control, shouting about “a cult involving business people, physiotherapists, teachers, bloody Europeans, bloody Japanese, and Alien Barbarian Buddhists!”

At being labelled ‘cult members’, my friends were all extremely angry, especially as the judge had stated this without a single shred of evidence. My friend from the Italian embassy, in particular, was definitely not amused when the judge described them as ‘thugs’ and ‘lowlifes’. As it turned out, the judge didn’t even let them into court, as they were not Irish Roman Catholics, and he even threatened to have them arrested because of this – had he completely lost his mind?

It seemed that he definitely had; at one point, the judge started shouting out at a ‘Mrs Harris’. I have no idea to this day who this Mrs Harris was or is, and it was clear that the judge was either getting his cases mixed up, or that he was actually ‘losing it’. Either way, it wasn’t exactly the professional environment you’re meant to expect from a court of law. All the people who were waiting to be called in – teachers, business people, musicians, and people from various embassies – wanted the judge to withdraw his false accusations against them. Actually, one of these people was best friends with a circuit court judge, so my judge had been labelling another judge as a cult member. It was just ridiculous, like a comedy on TV. But this was actually happening. This was real.

*Solicitor:* How did you cope with this situation, which seemed so ludicrous from the outside?

*Catherine:* To be honest, I don’t know how I didn’t crack under the pressure of it all and just go back. That was the judge’s plan all along, of course, but I knew that I had to protect my children no matter what. I also knew that I wasn’t the only one going through this; there were lots of other women there at the courthouse, and most of them came over to me crying their eyes out and saying how unfair the whole thing was. The judge had also called them all kinds of names – just because they were female – and they all described him as being a ‘nutcase’, which I had to agree with.

My friends (the witnesses) all went to their lawyers that day – wherever they were in the world – to get affidavits drawn up, stating that they were not cult members. They also made statements saying that I was an excellent mother and that my husband was two-faced. It was so great of them to do that, but the affidavits were never allowed into court – simply because they were from non-Roman Catholics. I got the lawyer who represented me that day in court to write down what the judge had said: ‘Keep away from the cult and have nothing to do with the Barbarian Buddhists.’ I just couldn’t believe the insanity of it all! I still have all of their affidavits to this day.

It was agreed then that I would move into a house of my own – with the children – for a month, but neither the judge nor the solicitors looked at any of the practicalities that would have to be involved. For example, my friends had to come up with the money to make this happen, and there was a problem with the children’s school: it was forty miles away from the house and I had to drive the children there every morning and then back again every evening. This resulted in me staying near the school all day so that I wouldn’t have to drive 160 miles every day. Again, it felt like I was taking one step forwards and two steps back.

*Solicitor:* Did you have any social services assessments during this period?
Catherine: Yes. A week later came the infamous case conference arranged by HSE/SS social workers, a probation officer, a police officer, a children’s teacher, a health nurse, a psychologist and a psychiatrist. This was all new to me and it was a very intimidating experience – or it was meant to be, anyway. I was all alone with no legal representation.

I hadn’t even received any advice on how these conferences operate, but I kept going, hoping to clear my reputation. As soon as violence and abuse were mentioned, the police officer left the room.

I found this odd as my understanding at the time was that domestic violence and child abuse were both crimes. The psychiatrist was adamant that the incident with the shotgun had never happened, despite the fact that there were two witnesses and that my brother-in-law came some days later to apologise and to say that my husband told him to do it. Even with all that, it apparently ‘never happened’. They just kept saying that Robert was lying about the whole thing.

There was a whole room full of people, but of course, they were all on the same side, and it wasn’t mine. My husband had got legal advice and therefore wasn’t say anything. When a health visitor complained that Emma didn’t have her jabs, I explained why: that I’d been advised by a specialist in Dublin not to give any of my children any more jabs because of several factors – including the family’s allergy history and because of the serious reaction that Robert had to his first jab. I even told them to phone the specialist I’d seen to confirm this, but they refused. I was labelled ‘negligent’ despite having followed the specialist medical advice I’d been given.

The whole thing turned incredibly sinister when I politely told them that I’d bring this expert witness to court with me next time so he could back up my story and explain the medical implications of my children’s cases. At this point, one of the social workers stated that the expert would ‘never make it to court’ on my behalf. I didn’t know how to take this then, but later that day, I called the specialist myself and found out he had died – on that very day. I was shocked, of course, but I was too busy and emotionally drained to really dwell on that thought: what exactly had happened?

Did the social worker have a crystal ball? Is that why they could tell me – in advance – of another professional’s demise? Could it be possible? It was all too much to ponder at the time. There was no internet back in those days so I couldn’t find out at the time, but I later discovered that the specialist had died of a sudden heart attack, at age 61. How the social worker knew about this, or seemed to know about it, I still have no idea to this day.

I did, however, have one person on my side: the children’s teacher was extremely annoyed with both departments and how they were behaving, running a smear campaign against me, and he made his opinions clear to all at the conference. He knew me and my children well as we met at school on a daily basis. I also helped out at certain school events and even supplied materials for the school, so he knew what sort of person I was.

Later on, he told me that he’d never seen such bullying and intimidation of a service user in all of his life. That day ended with the probation officer running down the hall and screaming at me on the way out, his eyes bulging with rage as he shouted, “Go home and obey your husband!” The school teacher just turned and asked me, “What era is this officer living in?” I’m glad I had someone who could see my side of the story.

Solicitor: What assessment did you have next?
Catherine: The next day was the psychological assessment, and I felt that I’d had absolutely no break. Most of the discussion was based on the previous day’s conference, but it was the social worker who was actually conducting the psychological assessment. I later checked and learned that this social worker was not a psychologist at all. This male senior social worker was asking questions like, “Do you go around the house naked?” He also asked if Emma (then aged four) knew the facts of life, and whether or not I pointed out to her that my breasts were bigger than hers.

There were a lot of questions like that, and the qualified psychologist said very little, which made me wonder. If she was the psychologist – and clearly she was a trained psychologist – then why was she not doing the assessment? It just didn’t seem to make sense – any of it. I didn’t know if the social worker was playing mind games, or if he just wanted to see how I’d react to such questions, I had no idea.

Either way, I felt confident; after all, I had nothing to hide. I was also a professional myself, with psychology and sociology qualifications, although this was never mentioned. I had all the qualifications regarding child development and age-appropriate language, and yet I was still being treated as some feeble-minded Irish mother.

Even with my confidence, nothing could stop the social worker from stating things as he saw them. He reprimanded me for being, “too confident, too strong for a woman, too sure of yourself,” and therefore, “a witch”. Without a broomstick or crystal ball in sight, here was another state agent who was trying to put me in my place in Roman Catholic Ireland. It felt like I’d never get through this, never get past all of these ridiculous accusations. Then it got worse. The social worker started with the mental torture tactics, threatening that, “he had big grey buildings with bars on the windows for children like Robert and Emma.” He said that he’d have them locked away and given Electric Shock Therapy to burn out all the memories of violence and abuse. Of course, I found this extremely shocking; why should children like Robert and Emma need locking away? Why were the victims being punished and not the perpetrator? I just couldn’t believe what I was hearing. I also knew that – officially – a psychiatrist would have to sign an order for ECT (Electroconvulsive Therapy), and my children hadn’t been to any psychiatrist to be assessed.

I recall the social worker pointing at me during the assessment and saying, “Remember, I have the power to do anything I like with you.” I remarked that it was the judge, in fact, who had the power, but the social worker disagreed; he was adamant that his department told the judge what to do. I’ve actually done a lot of research on this since and have found it to be true in most cases. I also found out that there was a manual which some sadistic social workers used to mentally torture service users, to break them and their children in order to get them to bow to them as if they were gods. It’s both incredible and awful to think about.

Solicitor: What happened when it came to assessing the children?

Catherine: A few days later, Robert went in for his assessment. The same as before, I kept a contemporaneous diary with dates and times for everything. Little did I know then just how important this would be now; it has helped me immensely when trying to relate my story with as much accuracy as possible. Back then, I had made sure to reassure the children that all they had to do was tell
Emma disclosed to me what she remembered: that the social worker kept telling her what to draw and that she kept refusing. So, in essence, he failed to bully her. Emma also recalls being told that she would only be given a drink and an orange if she said what they wanted her to say. She was really thirsty as she was in the assessment for over an hour, but they just kept manipulating her and bribing her to get what they wanted.

She later recalled – at age sixteen – that she felt she was at fault for what had happened to us later on; she answered no to the sex question as she simply didn’t know what sex was. She was only four at the time, after all. This was then used to say that the abuse never happened and that I had been lying about it the whole time.

After this experience, Robert’s trust in people died a quick death. The following day in school, he was shaking all over and his teacher called me in and explained that he was very distraught during the day, because he’d been accused of telling lies. Robert’s teacher knew the truth and witnessed the distress caused to him by those claiming to be child protectors. Robert remained distressed for several days afterwards, which was very hard to watch.

Solicitor: Did they assess anyone else in relation to the case?

Catherine: Yes. My friend (who had been helping me out with money and the house, and who also helped out other female domestic violence victims) was also invited to attend for an assessment. Naturally, he was very annoyed at the way everyone was being treated by these child protection agents, with their condescending attitudes and sneaky ways of getting people to say things they wanted to hear. They asked him to sit on a floor cushion while they sat up high on chairs, even though they knew he was

the truth and that everything would be fine. Of course, nothing was ever that easy, and to my horror, Robert came out screaming and crying, saying how the social worker and psychologist kept calling him a liar over and over again. “Liar, liar, liar, Mum! That’s all they kept saying over and over, until I couldn’t think anymore!”

It was awful to see him like that. He was so traumatised by the social worker and the sidekick psychologist that he didn’t even know his name, and he was sweating profusely. These people were supposed child protection experts and it turned out that they were abusers themselves! Legal abusers. Whether they actually realised this or not, I’m still not sure.

Robert pleaded with me to go home, never wanting to see any of them again. It sounded like even the professional psychologist was a bully, trying to ask trick questions. I tried to distract Robert a little and we went for ice cream so that I could concentrate on driving home safely. There was just no point in asking the GP or other professionals for help, as I knew that would be used against me as well. I was learning fast. It was tough, but I thought that the more I learned, the more likely I’d be able to get out of this mess.

That night, Robert couldn’t sleep. He just kept asking, over and over again, “Why didn’t they believe me, Mum?” It broke my heart; I could clearly see just how traumatised he’d become. Much later on, he blanked the whole episode out, and he refuses to speak about it now – that’s how badly affected he was, and by so-called child protection experts as well.

Then, it was Emma’s turn, even though she was just four years old at the time. Again, they were asking her all these questions about sex – I felt that they were obsessed with that one three-letter word. She seemed fine at the time and just drew her pictures for them, but twelve years later, Emma disclosed to me what she remembered: that the social worker kept telling her what to draw and that she kept refusing. So, in essence, he failed to bully her. Emma also recalls being told that she would only be given a drink and an orange if she said what they wanted her to say. She was really thirsty as she was in the assessment for over an hour, but they just kept manipulating her and bribing her to get what they wanted.

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I’ve found information regarding ‘Persecution tactics used in assessment’
tinyurl.com/m2hnagx
I found out from this source that, actually, it was the normal procedure during these assessments.

*Solicitor: What happened after this?*

*Catherine:* At this point in the proceedings, I decided to get a better solicitor in Dublin city. I just couldn’t put up with the firm I’d been with any longer; I had a different solicitor at each court hearing, and they weren’t even family law solicitors, they were just people with no knowledge of my case, or of domestic violence or child abuse in general. Even though they were trained in probate and commercial law (rather than family law), they all gladly took my money. Of course, at the time, I had no knowledge of there being incompetent solicitors out there; the PTSD really immobilised me and I left the legal part to the solicitors alone, which turned out to be a big mistake.

So, I went to a solicitor in Dublin to seek his advice, and he seemed good to start with. He explained that probation officers are not qualified to say whether someone is ‘brainwashed’ or not in the matter of parental alienation. This new solicitor met with Robert for an hour in his office at the request of the judge, and to my relief, he agreed that Robert was not only extremely eloquent on every subject for his age, but that he was also not in any way brainwashed. He confirmed to me that, “The social services don’t give a damn about children. They’re just bread and butter for the system.” After this meeting, he suggested that I have my friend’s house to myself and the children for one month, to show that there wasn’t any cult or brainwashing involved of any kind. I was delighted, as were the

**Solicitor: Did anything else happen during your own assessment?**

*Catherine:* There was something: I was suddenly accused by the psychologist of being drunk. It was totally out of the blue and I was very taken aback in that moment as I have never had alcohol in my entire life. I did, however, have ME/CFS, so I did tend to stagger sometimes when walking, which sometimes gave off the wrong impression. With my condition, though, I couldn’t drink anyway.

I clearly remember being blinded by the sunlight on entering the room, which naturally caused me to wobble slightly, and this is clearly what they picked up on. I immediately asked that the police be called to check my blood alcohol level to prove the truth, but the psychologist didn’t want the police involved and said that it was OK.

It was all just more mind games, with the aim of unnerving me. At that point, I felt the issue was resolved, but I was to find out later in court that the psychologist had informed the court (in papers) that I turned up inebriated for my assessment. Afterwards, I really wished that I’d gone to the police myself to get my blood checked, so that I would have it all on record. For the judge, hearsay was seemingly sufficient evidence, and my reputation continued to be decimated at every single assessment. I’ve since done a lot of research on these types of assessments, and

terminally ill (he’d been diagnosed in hospital and had hid it well for a while. He had other illnesses too, due to being a hostage in the Vietnam War for four years, and was often mistreated because he was non-Roman Catholic). It was all about power: about showing that they had it, and that he definitely did not. To these assessors, it was all just mind games – sadistic, cruel, mind games.
either (he’d clearly come to the same conclusion as the refuge social worker). Instead, he suggested that I “make up good qualities and lie to the children”.

Solicitor: What did you say to your children about your husband?

Catherine: The truth was I never mentioned my husband when I was at home with the children. Unfortunately, my husband told me that he’d been advised “to pretend to care about the children” in order to make him look good in the eyes of the judge. Not only was this a complete farce, but it also took the spotlight off him and onto the children and I. Since then – in my work as a DV advocate – I have witnessed this tactic being used in every single domestic terrorist case right up to the present year.

In my case, the social worker was obsessed with power, reminding me over and over again that he had it, not me. He was relentless in this. He then became angry when he realised how many family law books I was reading, as he felt like I knew too much and that I would somehow use my new-found knowledge to get one over on him. You see, I was studying as much as I could because there didn’t seem to be a single solicitor out there who could compete with this social worker. The solicitors I was paying weren’t even working on my behalf – they just did as they pleased, not listening to me and definitely not taking any notice of my instructions. They believed just what the courts believed – that I was another feeble-minded Irish woman – and therefore they thought they knew better than I did.

Years later, when I had the chance to do some healing work, I realised that I wasn’t mad – it was just that the system is set up in such a way as to make protective mothers look mad. This means that the children end up getting
placed with the abuser. Then, as real, caring mothers will inevitably fight to the death to protect their children, the court case drags on and on until the mother runs out of money. Then she succumbs to living on the streets. Game over. It happened – and happens – time and time again. It’s terrible. I have also since learned that the vast majority of Irish solicitors will not go head to head with the HSE/SS social workers in case their own children get snatched. It’s a way of keeping control over the child snatching business – children are a commodity for making money (there is massive money in the fostering business).

**Solicitor:** What happened with the assessment by an independent psychologist?

**Catherine:** Well, this same male social worker had got in touch with the private psychologist – for reasons unknown to me at the time – thus jeopardising any independent assessment. The private psychologist said she could not do the assessment as it would be unfair, due to the social worker telling her what to write about me. I’ve since learned that this happens in many cases and is still common today in the UK, Ireland, Australia and the USA.

The social worker controls which way the case will go. Some psychologists will play along and some will not. In my case, the social worker felt that I was too strong for a woman living in Catholic Ireland and he wanted to teach me my place as a ‘breeder’ for the system, and nothing more. It seemed that the social worker and his cohorts were ahead of me in everything, and when he said that he “would get my kids for ECT one way or another”, he meant every single word.

But he had underestimated me, because of course, I wasn’t giving up. It was hard, though, especially with all the mind games that were going on. For example, it was arranged that a group of social workers would call round to the house a few days later as part of the assessment, but the senior social worker wanted to be left alone in the house for thirty minutes. I refused, citing that “it was not my property”. He promptly announced, “I will remember that in court. Now repeat after me three times: I HAVE THE POWER.” In response, I told him that, “I had more power in my little finger than all of him put together.” I then phoned the police to check the law regarding a social worker asking to be left alone in any house – I’d heard stories where they had gone to the toilet and planted drugs there, so I was being very careful.

Then, for whatever reason, the social worker wanted me to go with him in his car to the school. Naturally, I refused, and he snarled at me like a dog. When I told the police about this, they were surprised that any social worker would ask a female service user to travel alone with him in his car, and they asked if I had actually seen the social worker’s qualifications. I had never thought to ask; I just assumed that HSE/SS had checked him out. Later on, I discovered that the register for social workers only came into being in 2013. The police felt that I was being threatened and intimidated by this social worker because I was alone.

Later in the afternoon, the other care workers arrived. It was not the best of days. Emma refused to play with the care worker as she smelled really bad. She had obviously slept in her clothes, she smelled of alcohol, and she even had faeces on her shirt, which was not very inviting to Emma. Even I had to keep my distance from the smell. This woman complained that Emma wouldn’t play with her, and I felt like saying, “Have a shower and clean yourself up and then she might play with you”, but I decided
against it. I nearly mentioned the state she was in but then stopped – I’d learned by now that any complaint I made would be used against me. I was just amazed that this child care worker would even come to a home smelling like this, and then to present in court the next day, still in the same clothes and still smelling the way she did… it was just unbelievable.

After their experiences in the previous psychological assessments, both children were now wary of these ‘do-gooders’ and what they wanted. They would not be fooled a second time. The senior social worker puffed smoke into my face for the entire time. Then, he began clicking his fingers and saying, “Repeat after me: I have the power”. I refused to say this. Then he said that he would get his hands on the children one way or another, even if it meant making me homeless to score the legal point. He would make sure that the ‘little brats’, who refused to obey him, would get Electric Shock Treatment in order to ‘normalise’ them. He even explained to me that there were no real grounds to take them at the moment, so he would have to see to it that I was made homeless. Despite everything, I remained very composed and told him, very coldly and calmly, that, “It will be a cold day in Hell before you see me homeless.”

Then he became extremely irate and announced that he would bring charges of emotional abuse against me unless I made up good qualities about my husband and made the children believe them. I explained that his name was never mentioned on orders of the court anyway.

Later that week, I met a lady who confirmed that this same social worker had given her a proposal: if she had sex with him in her car, he would let her keep her children. Of course, that was a trick to get free sex, and then he would have snatched the children from her anyway.

I realise now how lucky I was back then. These were supposed to be professional people and they know that they’re untouchable, so they abuse their power in any way they feel like. It still goes on today. The pattern is always the same, and it is outlined in research from Sweden in the Rhetoric case. If I had not been given a copy of the Rhetoric case persecution tactics, I would have doubted my sanity and that of others who shared similar stories in Ireland. It seems hard to believe a lot of these stories, but they’re much more common than I thought back then.

Solicitor: How were things with your family while you were going through all this? Did you see your mother, for instance, during this time?

Catherine: I saw my mother for the last time in May of that year. We met in a supermarket and she verbally attacked me, but she was careful to make sure that other shoppers didn’t hear her. My mother had been told by the social worker that I was having an affair, and she believed him. She just couldn’t understand how I could leave my beautiful home and husband. This was all down to that institutional grooming where my husband cunningly persuaded my mother and the professionals to believe the lie. There was no mention of my husband and the child next door rumour, of course (the rumour was that he was sexually abusing the little girl next door, which after walking in on him and my daughter, made sense. Still, Ireland was – and still is – a place where sexual abuse is just too taboo to mention). She just spoke of me, “the Eve ill one”. I said my truth out loud so all could hear, and she didn’t like that at all. I believe that we will never ever meet again, and I believe it’s best that way.

Of course, I knew the real truth: my mother was more
but that’s just the way it played out. So, when the social worker said that he ‘felt’ him there — therefore planting the seed of doubt that he hadn’t, in fact, move out as promised — it had the desired effect. It was all just implication and innuendo with absolutely no proof or hard facts. My friend was actually 280 miles away – if he wanted to, the social worker could have verified this with just one phone call. But, of course, he didn’t.

The care worker just sat there in front of me, dressed in the same dirty clothes as the day before, and then my husband’s solicitor proposed the ‘best’ offer of all: I was to be allowed to use my own home from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. each day. This basically meant that I was allowed the house to sleep in with the children, but what of the days? I wondered where I was supposed to spend them – on the streets again, it seemed. This same social worker then pompously announced that he now had me ‘boxed in’, and that I had no choice but to return home and obey my husband, like they’d been telling me all along.

I was almost deaf from hearing the same thing over and over again from all these so-called ‘professionals’. This social worker definitely loved to hear himself talk, and next came his elation at having isolated myself and my children from everyone who cared about us. He thought that my friend would demand his home back and that because I had no money, then I’d have no choice but to go home anyway.

The social worker then announced, “You are now dependent on me and you will do everything I say”. These were typical of his words and threats, and he was using the very same abusive tactics as my husband was. The social worker was a legalised abuser, using the system to get back at me for standing up for myself in the first place.

By now, I was immune to his shouting and the way he worried about what the neighbours would say than the suffering of her own daughter and grandchildren. It had always been that way, and it seemed like it would always be that way in the future as well.

**Solicitor:** What happened next in terms of the social workers?

**Catherine:** When I went to Dublin to visit my new solicitor, he explained to me how these social workers could make my life hell and that even the law would be powerless against them. I really was clueless to the power of SS social workers back then – I just had no idea.

The police phoned me to suggest that I press charges against the social workers for intimidation and the threats they had made against me. They also wondered why British social workers had been employed, considering the enormous differences between the two cultures, and considering that British social workers only had diplomas, compared to Irish social workers who had to have full degrees. They advised me to ask the British social worker for a copy of his qualifications; after all, he claimed to be a qualified social worker, family therapist, psychiatrist, and psychologist. Yet when I checked with all these agencies, he was not bonded or known to any of them. I still haven’t had a response from HS/SS on this matter to this day. It’s just incredible.

Before I knew it, there was yet another day in court, and yet again, the social worker used the Rhetoric case tactic of creating a false picture in the mind of the judge by stating that, “While her male friend was not in the house when he called, he ‘felt’ him”. You see, the court had asked if my male friend would keep out of his own home for the duration of the assessments, something which he agreed to with no problems. This seems totally crazy in hindsight,
When His Eyes Turned White

Solicitor: What happened next in the proceedings?

Catherine: Well, of course, nothing ever went that well for that long. Some days later, another female social worker phoned to say that, “I would have to drag the children by the scruff of the neck to the social services offices,” so that my husband would have contact – as fathers have rights and own their children. Also, the judge didn’t care how I got them there, just as long as my husband had contact. Of course, there was the usual threat of prison for non-compliance, so I found myself in a big dilemma. If I dragged my children physically by the neck, I would be guilty of physical abuse. If I did not abuse my children, then I was breaking the court order. This was court-ordered child abuse.

As I learned, nothing could be further from the truth. I was lucky in the way that I knew about these methods of torture from history. The breaking-down tactic was identical to that used in Nazi SS interrogation centres. Clearly, this social worker was of the same ilk: sadistic in nature and suffering from the Schadenfreude disease.

Solicitor: How were the children getting on at this point?

Catherine: I took Emma to a doctor to check for any signs of abuse. The doctor noted how happy and healthy she was, how she loved healthy food and how well-mannered she was. I made sure to keep Emma relaxed, of course. I was happy to see that this doctor was 100% professional and caring. My solicitor then spoke with Robert for half an hour again and was adamant that he was in no way brainwashed. He noted that, “If Robert and Emma were taken into care, it would be the biggest injustice Ireland had ever seen”.

rant on and on like a broken record.

The idea that these people were getting away with it seemed unreal at the time, but not now. I know the pattern. That same week, a young mother committed suicide after coming out from a local Social Services meeting, and while it was awful, I fully understood how this could happen. It’s all mental torture and it’s all unexpected because we, as citizens, are led to believe that the SS do-gooders are here to assist us in our times of need.

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It all seemed so crazy, as my husband had stated quite clearly that he did not want contact at all, as he just wasn’t bothered. He was obviously being forced into being a parent for the very first time in his entire life; the social worker clearly felt that my husband had a right to be a parent now, and that he should have full custody in order to be one. However, he would have to find a woman locally to look after them as he had no intention of doing ‘mother’s work’, and sure enough, he found someone. It was clear that the system didn’t really care about the
children at all. It was simply patriarchal Ireland where men own their wives and children.

Some days later, I was in court again, and while I was out, the house was broken into and various papers and documents were rifled through. While this seems extreme, it is simply another tactic often used in this court process, and I have witnessed it in many other cases since.

Things then got worse for Robert, as he saw his father driving up and down outside the school, causing him to run inside, absolutely terrified. His teacher was amazing and reassured him that he was safe inside the walls of the school, and then phoned me to come in, explaining why he was so distressed and hiding under the table. It was just one thing after another.

Solicitor: What happened next in court?

Catherine: In court, my solicitor had explained to me that he had been in contact with my husband’s solicitor and that they were going to ask for an adjournment because the private psychological assessment had not taken place. However, my husband’s solicitor went in to see the judge before the case and, suddenly, the judge now wanted the case to proceed. ‘Just wonderful’, I thought to myself, and then the cold reality hit home: my solicitor hadn’t prepared anything, in the belief that the case would be adjourned. So, I watched in horror as my solicitor stood up there like a fish out of water, unable to compose even one single thought for a while.

He knew he had been hoodwinked by the opposition – you could see it all over his face. Then he asked for copies of the court reports but HSE/SS refused, stating that it might affect me emotionally, because I am a woman. When the solicitor asked for copies for himself as her solicitor, he was also refused. “How can I defend my client without full disclosure?” he asked the judge. The judge replied that it was his court and that he could do as he liked, at which point my solicitor called out, “this is a police state!” and stormed out of the room. The social worker had informed the court that the children and I had no permanent place to live and so they should proceed to take the children into care for the ECT to be performed. He said that the children would then be placed back with their abusive father until they reached the age of eighteen.

I soon realised that everything had been carefully planned in advance, and that everyone knew the plan except for my solicitor and me. In hindsight, my own solicitor may well have been in on the game too. I came to this conclusion because he kept failing to show up for court, even though he’d been paid.

He was on my side to begin with, but when the probation officer threatened to run him out of town, he changed completely. I had totally lost trust in him at that point. I told all of this to a present solicitor last year and he didn’t believe me, until he took on a similar case. After six months of working on that case, he came back to me and said that I understated the way things work in rural family law court cases. He also found the social workers doing all of the things that I’d mentioned too.

Anyway, the probation officer sneered at me and remarked how stupid my hot shot Dublin city solicitor was, and how he would make sure he never came back to Meath again. Family therapy was proposed and I queried what this therapy entailed – was it ECT? Brainwashing? Threat therapy?

I was forced to agree to family therapy, just to get out of there, even though I believed that the social workers were going to use it to re-shape my family according to
He couldn’t resist sneering at me, telling me that behind my back, my husband had got a court order making sure that I didn’t leave the country with the children. This was called an ex parte application and order, and I never understood why I was the applicant on that order: why would I apply to a court against myself? Even my solicitor knew nothing about it, and had assumed that I’d forgotten to tell him about the hearing. It was an ex parte hearing, so no one else knew. My solicitor was livid with me at the time and this led to mistrust between us, as intended. Just yet more mind games.

It was ironic because another social worker had suggested that the children go abroad for a holiday, due to the stress from the abuse and the assessments. Then, suddenly, the male social worker announced that it would take about three years of family therapy to sort things out. This was a big change, considering that he had told the judge it would take approximately four or five months. Again, this is taken from the Rhetoric case persecution tactics used by sadistic social workers. At this point – and considering the obvious lack of professionalism present as well as his sadistic nature – I asked to see the social worker’s qualifications. He, of course, refused point blank.

Then he resumed his scare tactics, asking me what would happen to the children if they were put into a care home. Knowing of the abuse suffered by Irish children in the care system, I thought carefully for a while and then replied, “They will die.” I thought that Robert would run away and that Emma would refuse to eat or drink anything. At this point, I knew for definite that things were serious, and that it really was all just about power.

This social worker was never going to admit that he had made a mistake, and he was never going to back down. To him, the children were just tiny pawns in a big game of
telling lies (like he’d been doing) was a very bad example to set for the children. I also sent a letter to my mother, who was also apparently going to be dragged into the family therapy as well. In it, I asked my mother to honour my father’s will. I decided that it would be best to send copies to the judge himself as I now knew I should record every letter and also have proof of postage, to try and stop the social workers from trying to get away with untruths in the court. I was learning. Despite all of the horrific things I’d been through with the courts, I was getting something positive from it, making sure I knew how to continue and giving myself the best possible chance to get through it all.

Solicitor: Tell me about the last time you appeared in court.

Catherine: At my next and final court appearance, I decided to represent myself, as my solicitor had called in ill, yet again. Clearly, he had been threatened by someone in a powerful position, most likely (I thought) by the probation officer and social worker. I told the judge that this time I intended to speak for myself and then he would know the truth. Of course, true to form, the social worker told the court that I never called his office when I was supposed to.

However, I brought copies of all the phone records to prove that I called the social worker when I did. Luckily, I had proof from my phone bill, and I also got the team leader to confirm in writing that I had, in fact, called their office and spoken to her. I said nothing, just kept all my evidence safe for the next big day in court.

Then, I sent a letter to my husband – as ordered – stating that we were ready to begin therapy, and that telling lies (like he’d been doing) was a very bad example to set for the children. I also sent a letter to my mother, who was also apparently going to be dragged into the family therapy as well. In it, I asked my mother to honour my father’s will. I decided that it would be best to send copies to the judge himself as I now knew I should record every letter and also have proof of postage, to try and stop the social workers from trying to get away with untruths in the court. I was learning. Despite all of the horrific things I’d been through with the courts, I was getting something positive from it, making sure I knew how to continue and giving myself the best possible chance to get through it all.

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time, I had my evidence and, again, put it in front of the judge’s nose. He asked the social worker to explain but the solicitor for the social workers quickly jumped up and said, “No comment”. The psychologist had written that I showed up drunk, so I immediately pointed out that I did not drink due to my medical condition. I was determined not to let them drag me down.

I had never done anything like this before, but I was determined for the whole truth to reach the judge’s ears, once and for all. I told him that I was not a member of any cult, and that if I was, no one had ever put a name to it or found out where it operated from, or even produced one single fact as proof. I also pointed out that, apparently, I was the only one in this cult, which sounded rather odd in light of the proper definition of the word ‘cult’.

I also pointed out that the probation officer had been attending conferences, and that once he had come back, he was seeing every mother of abused children as an alienator, and that anyone who thought for themselves was automatically labelled as a cult member. I then called attention to the fact that, according to the social worker, “Even the judge didn’t have the power” and that the social workers “tell him what to do”. Well, that took the grin off everyone’s faces, as the room fell into an eerie silence.

Now that I’d got everyone’s attention, I carried on. I told the judge what the social worker had told me about locking up the children and arranging Electric Shock Treatment for them as punishment for disclosing abuse. Then, suddenly, everyone was completely awake, and the judge looked totally baffled – there just isn’t any other word to describe the look of surprise and confusion that was on his face. So, I continued to tell him, now that I finally had his attention, along with everyone else’s, that the police had advised me to issue proceedings against the social worker over his threatening and intimidating behaviour. It felt so good to finally get this all out, to get the truth out there for everyone to hear.

Solicitor: How did you feel? Standing up and saying all of this to the judge?

Catherine: When I was standing up and talking in court, the whole scene felt surreal. I composed myself very quickly as I knew I had no other choice – I either had to represent myself or lose the children. I had all of the facts and proof on paper, so there was no denying anything with words. The social worker and SS psychologist – and their solicitor – were spitting fire, but I remained detached. I was so proud of myself after I did it.

The judge was very confused now, as he clearly had no idea what was happening. He asked for the whole truth, so at least he was willing to listen. However, he also pointed out that the letters to my husband and my mother were not conciliatory enough. At the time I didn’t know what the word ‘conciliatory’ meant – I knew the gist but wanted to make sure I understood – and he started laughing at my lack of vocabulary, obviously thinking that I was the usual feeble-minded woman. I asked for an exact explanation – was I supposed to bow to my husband and mother? I explained that English wasn’t my first language and that I wanted to be sure of his interpretation of the word ‘conciliatory’.

Of course, I knew what it meant, but I wasn’t able to put another word on it at that moment, while everyone was staring at me. Even now, I’m still surprised at myself and what I managed to achieve that day. I was so proud that I was finally standing up for myself and saying what had needed to be said for months. It was a good moment.
Solicitor: How did this court session end?

Catherine: The judge asked for proper facts for the next hearing, and then the social services solicitor asked that I hand the children over to my mother until the next court appearance. This was a big shock to me, and at the thought of them going to my mother, all of my own childhood memories began to flash before me. I began to panic; I just couldn’t even consider the prospect at all, I didn’t dare.

Then, to my complete surprise, the judge apologised to me for the way I was treated by the social workers and for all the lies. He said that he had to obey them, however, as they are the experts in child protection. I expected the social worker and psychologist to be arrested on the spot for perjury, but no. Still, I had said what needed to be said, and after the day I’d had, I just wanted to go home and cry with relief.

Outside the court, the solicitor for the social services began bullying me, physically cornering me into the wall outside the court office. I was all alone and frozen in shock; I just didn’t know what to do. I was very scared – I felt extremely threatened and lonely in that moment. She demanded that I hand the children over to my mother, who would get money every week to look after them. She also informed me that my husband had signed the order for the Electric Shock Therapy to be carried out on the children. Of course he had; it was a great way of burning out the truth at the expense of the children. For me, signing my children over to my mother would be the equivalent of sending them to Hell. Not knowing what else to do, I called over to a man, pretending I knew him, and then the SS/HSE solicitor walked away.

That was my last ever appearance in court. That evening, I realised that the entire case had nothing to do with the interests of the children or me; it was all to do with the father and the patriarchal system having control. I knew that I had to take the children somewhere safe – clearly, the system that claimed to protect us was a complete myth. It just came to me: I was going to get nowhere if I continued down the path I was on, and so I had to escape before the next court hearing. I simply had to get out of there. I knew that the system (like the Catholic Church) was going to punish both me and my children for bringing the violence and abuse to light.

I was supposed to suffer in silence for the sin of being a woman. As it turned out, I wasn’t in the house to receive the next court summons, which – as I learned later – was to my advantage.
So, I decided to escape. I did it quietly, so as not to scare the children. Between us, we found accommodation in various ways. As I’d already decided, I home schooled Robert and Emma, as I knew that the social worker would locate them if they were in school. At around this time, Robert became very assertive and began taking on an adult role to help me and his sister.

Initially, we went to stay with friends – teachers, like myself – who offered us a place to stay for a while. However, a police friend of mine advised moving out of Ireland entirely because of the Electric Shock order for Robert. So, around a year after the last court hearing, we moved to London, using different identities and praying to the Universe that we would get away safe – and we did.

Fortunately, we had many friends in London who assisted us financially and emotionally, and I can never thank them enough. Then, when our friend died in 1997, after a terrible year of pain and suffering, we found it tougher. We couldn’t attend his funeral or anything like that in case we were recognised, something that held us back in a lot of instances. For example, I didn’t claim any benefits, even though I was entitled to them. We couldn’t attend doctors or dentists, and the children still couldn’t go to school in case we were found and caught.

Therefore, I continued to home school them myself as we moved around the UK. We lived in many different places, including Scotland, and we sought out cheap accommodation and various house-sitting jobs along the way. We just stayed under the radar like criminals, and every single day I lived in fear that we might get caught. It was a very difficult way to live, but it was much better than what I’d escaped from. I learned later on that I was the applicant in court (against myself) to remove the children from Ireland, which really left it null and void.
had nowhere to live. We went to London, which, compared with the tiny villages of Ireland, came as a complete shock to me. We were also completely traumatised by the court proceedings so our heads were all over the place.

I had been to London as a student in 1976, so I knew my way around a little, but it was completely different going there with two small children, having to home school them and house-sit and so on. Looking back, it was like being stuck in a time warp – I was totally spaced out and didn’t understand how my husband had institutionally groomed all of the professionals. I understand now, having learned from experts.

Some years later, I heard that my story had been all over the newspapers, as the social worker was determined to get my children and ‘fry their brains’. We moved from place to place, with the children doing history and geography lessons along the way. Robert began taking a keen interest in computers and programming; every morning, he headed for the nearest library and studied all day, and then he would go and buy books from charity shops so he had more to read at night.

During this time, the children and I met some really kind people with whom I shared my story. I managed what money we had carefully, and some extremely generous people offered us their holiday homes for free, which we graciously accepted. Other friends sent us money from all over the world. It was not an easy fourteen years, but it had to be done to keep the children safe.

By age fifteen, Robert was qualified and making his name in the world, and his expertise was highly sought after. Would he have achieved this in a HSE mental hospital with fried brains? Or even by working on the farm? No, not in a million years. Emma began making her own money too, working at weekends and making clothes. The children became very independent at a young age, and I supported them in every way possible. I am – and always will be – incredibly proud of both of them. I treasure them today in the same way as the days they were born, but I realise that they now have independent lives to lead.

Solicitor: What was it like leaving Ireland after it being your home for all those years?

Catherine: We could only move to the UK, as we had no passports to travel, and I was completely overwhelmed. I had to leave with nothing – no clothes or anything – and I
Becoming A Veteran Of Domestic Terrorism And Domestic Violence Advocate

Solicitor: What are you doing now? Did you have a career after you left Ireland?

Catherine: In recent years, I became an international Domestic Violence Advocate, and I saw the same pattern I’d experienced myself in every domestic violence case I came across, no matter what country the victim was living in. Fathers have the ultimate rights, even if they are child rapists or have criminal records.

Solicitor: What made you want to get all of this out into the open?

Catherine: I’ve learned so much from real professionals over the years, something which has encouraged me to use my horrific experience in order to help others going through the same thing. I was asked by a criminologist to write my story down and I gladly did so. I also accompanied victims of domestic terrorism to court, until I retired due to illness. I wrote my submission to the Irish Department of Justice in the hope of shedding light on the secret court system. In spring 2014, I was asked by FRA Vienna (Fundamental Rights Agency) to come over and take part in making a domestic violence video for EU, an offer which I, of course, accepted. I recall the warm welcome I received there and how people were shocked by my true story. Recently, I returned to Ireland to attend an FRA ‘Safe Ireland’ conference, and once again I noted the omission of the legal aspects, breaches of human rights, and Legal Abuse Syndrome. It is still happening today, and something simply has to be done about it.

Solicitor: And how are you now, in yourself?

Catherine: Due to the abuse I suffered during my marriage, and at the hands of the Irish state agents who were paid to protect the children and myself, I have had to spend many years healing myself, with the help of other professionals and specialists in this area. I realised that I had to stop blaming myself for the crimes of my husband. I was diagnosed with complex PTSD from all of the legal abuse and I am still working on healing that; I have worked with a trauma therapist for some time.

Once I learned from Dr Huffer about Legal Abuse Syndrome, I realised that it wasn’t just me who experienced the abuse inside the system – unfortunately, thousands of other protective mothers also went through it, and are still suffering at the moment. I set out to learn as much about the law as possible, as well as trying to understand why there was so much anti-mother venom among the court agents and social workers.

I read ‘Mothers On Trial’ by Phyllis Chesler, and saw the same pattern that the children and I had experienced. I made a vow that when my children were adults, I would tell my story in the hope that other victims of domestic violence would not have to suffer like we did.
Solicitor: And what happened with your husband?

Catherine: The truth regarding my husband finally came to light in the end, just as I said it would. He had moved another woman in to serve his needs, and much to my horror, it was the child next door (she who had been involved with the rumours of more sexual abuse), who was now a grown woman. I only learned in 2008 that they’d had children together. My daughter found it on the web and was very upset; his children now had cameras and other things that he’d never given her or Robert. It was at this point that she stated he was not her real dad because he hadn’t earned the title – his only title was ‘sperm donor’.

I heard from a friend that my husband was upset at me for leaving him, but only because of what the neighbours would say and because he no longer had anyone to do any work on the farm. Anyway, it was only a year before the girl next door moved in and took over what used to be my work – I had trained her up fully for years myself. I also heard how many of our mutual acquaintances felt sorry for him after I’d left, but that was because no one knew the truth: I was ‘gagged’ from speaking until 2008.

Solicitor: Have you spoken to your husband since you left Ireland?

Catherine: No. I never spoke to my husband again. I’m not divorced from him yet – there was no divorce in Ireland until 1997, and even then you had to live five years apart from each other before applying. However, I did learn through a PI that I am now legally separated and that all property went to my husband, as I am the applicant. This was when the solicitor didn’t take my instruction to withdraw my application, and so the hearing went ahead without me. The children and I were disinherited at this point. I am now pursuing a divorce, so I can finally close this chapter of my life and move on.

Solicitor: And what about the other people you knew in Ireland? Do you still speak to them?

Catherine: In terms of my family, I never spoke to my mother again. I did call her once in 2013 but she put the phone down on me. I contacted my brother a few years ago and we spoke for an hour – I learned a lot from him. He invited me back to Ireland, but I haven’t gone yet. I’ve had no contact with any of my other siblings since 1994, and some of them I haven’t seen or spoken to since my daughter’s christening in 1990. I also haven’t had any contact with friends or work colleagues in Ireland since 1996, as I couldn’t leave any kind of trail behind me. Just one lead, one phone call, could have got us all caught. After 2008, I tried to make contact with two dear friends who had assisted me in my time of need but sadly I found out they had both died – they’d only been in their forties.

Solicitor: How have you learned so much about the case in recent years?

Catherine: I learned a lot through Data Protection about what was really going on behind the scenes in the secret family courts. I learned of the laws being broken and of the judges and state agents doing as they pleased, all in typical Irish ‘who you know’ fashion. I had always wondered why my husband entered the court through the judge’s entrance, and why I wasn’t called into court at all one day, but left sitting there in the waiting area instead. I learned more recently that a court hearing went ahead without my
knowledge and that the children and I were disinherited. Once again, I was the named applicant, even though I had instructed them to withdraw said application.

I learned that all property of the marriage went to my abuser husband, including the two homes and the large amount of land that I had worked so hard on. I also learned of how my violent brother had betrayed me. My brother was, by that point, in the head position of an insurance company, and I had to insure my car. He knew that I would have to go into one of their offices to renew the insurance, and that’s how he found out which town I was in and consequently reported me to the HSE/SS.

I found this out in 2010 when I was looking through all of the files. I thought I knew my brother so well that I’d be able to foresee his actions, but I never expected to see this in the files, years later. Despite knowing what he was like, and despite all of the terrible things he’d done to me when I was little, that was like a crushing blow to my heart. The children were also punished for disclosing violence and abuse by having their inheritance rights extinguished. None of it was fair, not one tiny part of it.

**Solicitor:** What advice would you give someone who found themselves in the same situation you were in?

**Catherine:** Firstly, never ever believe that the system is designed to help women and children from violence and abuse – it’s not. It’s all about money and profit. Abuse equals profit for those who work in the system. If women like me disclose violence and abuse, they should expect to be punished. Unfortunately, that’s just the way it is, and most solicitors will advise this too. This keeps the violence and abuse hidden. Many women learn this from older sisters and other females and are therefore staying in the violent situations. The system has no intention of protecting children either. Under patriarchy, you should expect that the male abusers will be rewarded and even assisted in persecuting their victims further. It is always such a shock for female victims to learn the truth, because the media portrays female victims as being ‘the baddies’ – ‘Eve ill’ and all liars.

The advice given by the refuges is totally different to legal advice, as solicitors and judges are generally not trained in this area. That was my main point at EU/FRA this year, when I was chosen as the voice of 2014. Somehow, we are led to believe that these professionals are fully trained in domestic abuse language, when in fact, this isn’t true at all. A one day course in domestic violence does not make anyone an expert on the subject.

This is why all women in my situation need to record all incidents (discreetly) so that they have concrete proof. This is one of the biggest pieces of advice I can give to women who are going through the same things I went through – without evidence, you have nothing, so make sure you record everything. It’s a sad fact, but I have written for years now that the only victims that are believed are dead ones.

I would tell women going through the same thing that I went through to be strong. Leaving your husband can be the hardest thing you’ll probably ever have to do, but no one should put up with abuse of themselves or their children. You have to rise above the completely unfair legal system and make sure you get the justice you deserve. You are important. Your life is important. The lives of your children are important. You have the right to lead a healthy, happy life, free of fear, and that is what you must remember, even during the darkest days.

I got through it, and so can you.
When His Eyes Turned White

Articles

Catherine is currently living in the UK and is just about to begin divorce proceedings. Since leaving Ireland, she has worked as a Domestic Violence Advocate, helping others with her experience and knowledge. For this work, she has written several articles on the subject, some of which are included below for your reference.

Obey, Obey, Obey
Catholic Church Guilty of Ordering Women and Children Back To Male Abusers.

Originally posted on Indymedia Ireland
indymedia.ie/article/96229

Now that the light of truth has been shed on the Vatican and its role in keeping abuse of children hidden, it is time to expose the suffering endured by thousands of Irish mothers and their children who were ordered back home to their violent husbands by Catholic priests after they had escaped such abuse. It was standard practice in Ireland to make mothers return with their children – there was no support given! No help given! No advice given! Nothing. Just, “Get back to your husband, woman; that’s your place!” and, “The only way you can leave your husband is in a coffin, you know the rules of the Church.”

Obey, Obey, Obey.

If these women defied the priest and did not return, they were castigated, labelled as ‘Harlots’ and declared to be outcasts. Most went into exile and were never heard of again. Family and friends would side with the Catholic priest, meaning that the victims were further abused and isolated.

Women born into the Catholic Church in other countries experienced similar abuse from the priests and their cohorts for simply daring to escape the violence. The indoctrination of girls in Catholic schools worldwide and their roles in society is rarely spoken of, and the abuse of women in Catholic families continues to be hidden behind doors.

Catholic priests who ordered children and mothers back to the violence and abuse did not do so alone, but were operating according to higher orders. So, where exactly did these orders come from?

The teachings on this go back to St Augustine, who lived in a dysfunctional family where his mother was beaten and forced to obey the violent father. This “saint” then set about writing on how it is good for women to suffer at the hands of their husbands, because all women are evil and need to repent for the sin of being born female.

He also followed the teachings of Aristotle, who also saw the subjugation of women as being necessary for society.

The patriarchal church also taught that women who think they are being abused are simply deceiving themselves and should not be believed on principle. Keeping the women in the institution of marriage was all that mattered. The children of the marriage were not to be believed either, regarding abuse by the father, as that would make him look bad in the eyes of the community, and above all, a father’s reputation and good standing had to be protected.
By saying and doing nothing about the abuse, the Roman Catholic Church was thereby encouraging the denial of the realities of domestic violence as well as intrafamilial terrorism and the extreme sufferings of abused mothers and their children. Many mothers returned to the violence as a result of the priest’s directives, consequently suffering from broken health and even resulting in premature deaths. Children often suffered serious mental disorders or lapsed into crime, prostitution, and drug addiction.

Priests would commonly say to abused mothers, “His (the abusive violent father) soul must be saved! You must return to him and stay with him to save his soul or he will not be admitted to Heaven when he dies!”

The same patriarchal thinking has continued today into the legal system, whereby abused mothers and children are made to suffer for daring to come forward and trying to escape. This abuse has been allowed to continue into the next generation, thus perpetuating the cycle.

Solicitors and barristers warn protective mothers not to mention the abuse of their children by fathers to the Family Court judges, citing that, “judges are sick of hearing about child abuse”, and so the abuse just goes on and on, like it did in the Catholic Church.

Some judges in Ireland still order women and children home to “be good little girls and obey.” These are women of forty years, so hardly girls, but this is how patriarchal judges see them. It’s all part of the brainwashing and social conditioning of females by the Roman Catholic Church. The holy sanctity of marriage and “Till death do us part…” matters above all else, and certainly, the sufferings of mothers and children were of no account against the Catholic Church teachings.

Society still ostracises victims of domestic violence, citing that, “she made her bed, now let her lie in it”. “She has dishonoured the family name and must leave the community.” However, the husband is free to use and abuse his wife and children as he pleases.

The same patriarchal system, which labelled all women as evil, still uses the same excuses within law to allow the abuser to walk free. Here are a few well-known and typical excuses used by the RC Church and the Judiciary:

- “All women are evil.”
- “A woman’s only role is to produce babies.”
- “All women are emotional, and therefore are in need of locking up in the ‘Looney Bins’ should they step out of line.”
- “That will teach her to keep her mouth shut about male abusers.”
- “That will teach the rest of the strong women to keep quiet about abuse too.”

It is very simple for a violent husband to have his wife committed to a mental institution, in order for his image to be protected. Remember how it was: one word from the priest or the brutal husband, and the men in white coats arrived and the mother disappeared from society. Nobody was allowed to ever speak of her again. Of course, the real reason for locking women away was to get possession of the land, the property, and the children. This is no different to the days of the witch-hunts, when the Vatican men of God ordered that women be burned at the stake in order to get their property.

It is also worth noting that the Catholic Church singles out strong independent female children from a young age for persecution, aided and abetted by the Government agencies, especially social services. Young girls were sub-
From Domestic Violence Victim to Advocate
Judge and Barristers dance to the tune of abuser in domestic violence case.
Children and Mother continue to be abused by the psychopath legally endorsed by the system in the heart of the UK.

A true story from 2010.

In my role as an independent supporter, adviser, and advocate for children and protective parents over the last fifteen years, I have encountered and observed many situations of domestic violence and the terrorising of mothers and children by abusive males.

As an example, my most recent case involved a mother with two children and the abject fear they faced, which was brought into their lives by the abuser. After many years of suffering such violence in all its forms – physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and financial – the protective mother was finally able to gather enough strength to escape with her children from the torture and torment of their persecutor.

Their sufferings were more reminiscent of the 17th Century rather than the 21st Century. How could this be happening in today’s world? And yet it is happening every day, in every part of the country, at all levels of social class in our society, and with alarming and increasing frequency.

Unfortunately, the abuse and torture did not end with their leaving the family home, instead it continued and increased. The police records show that the mother suffered extreme mental torture whereby the abuser told his victim daily that he had poisoned her with arsenic and warfarin, that he had added dirt to her food, and that he could shoot her and she would not feel it; that he could murder her and walk away.
The mother had become so ill as to be unable even to make a cup of tea. However, the abuser smiled as she screamed in pain, and he stepped over her like she didn’t exist. If she asked for a soft-boiled egg, because of her teeth, he gave her a hard-boiled one, in full knowledge that she could not eat it. He then called her a pig, and slapped her so hard for not eating that she blanked out from the pain. When the mother asked for an explanation, the abuser said it was to teach her a lesson.

The abuser took sadistic pleasure in watching his victims squirm under his total control, and he only lost his cool when the terminally ill grandfather of eighty years came in for a week to help out. That week, the mother gained her strength and the children experienced the joys of working and learning from their grandfather. This act of human kindness sparked the planned exit from the abuser.

The gaunt appearance of the abused mother led most of the professionals to form the wrong opinion of her. The crocodile tears of the abuser worked, leading people to pity him. Inside, he was laughing at all of them, as he was succeeding in dividing and destroying the victim’s entire family. The abuser’s ring of destruction has widened and is still widening by the day. The system is allowing him to do this.

He is fully aware of what he does, mesmerising family members and professionals alike, as he entraps all of them in his web. The abuser has now managed to worm his way into getting a family member to hold the children hostage and not allow them to see their mother. The children are being used to send messages to their distraught mother that their father is going to buy some arsenic and warfarin and two body bags. This is child abuse in itself, as well as continued mental abuse of the mother. Text messages are...
sent in the middle of the night, stating that the children are being moved again and that the mother will never get to see them. One of the children has already ended up in hospital through neglect, and no one in the system informed the mother, furthering her anguish even more.

The dominant male abuser has everyone around dancing to his tune only. His aim is to have his victim committed, so that he can get her house and bring in another woman. After all, he has sucked the living life out of this wife and he now needs fresh meat to feed on. The abuser even managed to get the GP to force the mother to undergo psychiatric assessments.

A court hearing took place the other day and the abuser applied for occupation of the family home and residence of the children. It is not classified as a domestic abuse case, despite the fact that an advocate from the IDVA was present, and that photos of bruises on the mother and children were in the hands of the barrister. The judge, barristers, and so on were clueless, running around and trying to do deals, so they could scurry off home. No one listened to the weak voice of the abused, but they all danced to the tune of the bully. So, when the abuser said that the first psychiatric assessment of the victim was a fake, the judge ordered another one, but failed to make an order for the abuser to have one, showing clear discrimination of the female victim. The victim said she felt totally violated and abused by the judge and all of the legal professionals. All were pushing her to agree to the demands of the abuser.

One would have expected the children to be a priority in this case too, but sadly, the court – in its wisdom – has ordered the children to remain hostages in a strange house, and stripped of all their own possessions (pianos, computers, books, etc.). These children are home schooled and are about five years ahead of their peers in state schooling. In

A typical patriarchal fashion, the children must obey the abuser for a further six weeks and lose out on their education at home.

There was not one ounce of human kindness in that courtroom towards the victim, except from the advocate. The victim was a nuisance to them and they just wanted rid of her. Her weakness and frailty was held against her. The trauma caused to the children and mother by this experience is enormous, but the men and women of the court are clearly ignorant of this or are deliberately condoning it and colluding with a criminal.

The victims are mere numbers, pawns in a chess game, and of course, as long as the abuser is on the board, the game continues and money is made. Meanwhile, the vultures circle their prey, who are weak from abuse, in the hope of finishing them off.

This case shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that protective parents and their children are being punished by this patriarchal system for daring to break free of violence and abuse. The system, as it is, keeps the protective parent enslaved through the use of children. The only professional to see past the façade is the lady trained in domestic abuse.

In the media, it speaks of all the agencies rallying around to help victims of domestic abuse, but six weeks down the line, the only agency in sight was an independent domestic violence agency. Clearly it is a trap to ensnare the protective parents and their children.

55% of domestic abuse victims lose their children to forced adoption in the UK. This shows that protective parents and children are being punished for doing the right thing in trying to free themselves from abuse and violence. The professionals need proper training so they can understand all the dynamics involved in domestic abuse.
The professionals also need to learn from the survivors. However, most professionals believe themselves to know it all and feel that to speak to survivors is somehow lowering themselves. The truth on domestic abuse is rarely found in books. It is to be found, though, in talking to those who have lived through the abuse and survived.

* * *

World-Wide Pattern Followed in Court Licensed Abuse Cases

1) Child discloses abuse, usually sexual abuse. Law enforcement does substandard investigation, says there is not enough evidence to give to D.A. and closes the case. Child Protective Services does a substandard investigation, labels it unsubstantiated and shunts it into family court as a custody case.

2) Family Court Judge appoints insider children’s attorney and/or psychologists to shift blame to the mother by fraudulently reporting that she is a liar/alienator and/or mentally ill and recommend custody to the father, who they opine is the “friendly parent”.

3) Judge minimises, disregards and conceals evidence of abuse, finds the mother to be lying/alienating or mentally ill and gives custody to the abusive father.

4) Judge isolates children from the mother and anyone who might support the truth about the abuse while they are Stockholmed and brainwashed by the abuser, a “reunification/deprogramming” therapist, or an out-of-state camp, into forgetting about or recanting the abuse and agreeing to live with the abusive father.

5) Judge places mother on supervised visitation where neither she nor the children are allowed to speak of abuse, past or present. Supervision monitors report to the court if either speaks of the abuse and end the visits if they do.

6) Judge makes orders that prohibit children from seeing professionals who may support their disclosures, prohibits mother from taking children to doctors or therapists, and gives the perpetrator control over who they see.

7) Judge gag orders the mother so the public cannot hear about the abuse or the cover up of abuse and threatens that she will not see her children again if she does not remain silent and go along with the cover up.

8) Judge disempowers the mother by bankrupting her through the legal process, traumatising her through separation from her children, and enabling the abuse to continue.

NOTE: The reason this pattern is portrayed as “gendered” is because it reflects the reality that about 99% of cases which involve these tactics being used to switch custody from a good primary parent to an abusive one in family court involves the mother as the protector and the father as the abuser.

Most cases which involve abusive mothers are dealt with by CPS (the Crown Prosecution Service) and they don’t usually have any problem taking kids away from them. There is no known world-wide pattern of punishing and silencing fathers who are trying to protect their children.

* * *
The following is a paper that Catherine submitted to the Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality, and the words in her submission led to her becoming involved with the FRA (Fundamental Rights Agency) in Europe, where she has used her own experience in order to help those in need.

Submission on Domestic Violence.
Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality.

Violence towards a male or female has been defined by the United Nations as an abuse of the human rights of the victim. Research from a number of countries shows that males are the major assailants and that female on male violence cases are of negligible proportions. In this submission I will be focusing on the female victim as that reflects my personal experience.

I also have experience as an independent advocate.
My submission will focus on:
1. My own actual experience of coming forward as advised by the various Government agencies and what happened then.
2. How I learned through research and meeting other professionals that my case was not unique at all and that there was and is a pattern which perpetrators use to sideline the violence through various cunning methods.
3. By sharing my story, my aim is to lift the veil on domestic violence and highlight the need to bring to Eire scientific research from other countries in order to debunk the many old patriarchal myths regarding domestic violence.
4. An insight into the experiences of children in domestic violence proceedings.

5. How the media affects domestic violence with perpetrators mirroring the violence on TV and even using the same tactics.
6. The pernicious influence which the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has had on domestic violence, condemning and defiling the victims and protecting the assailants/abusers.
7. Recommendations:
I will outline some recommendations to consider.

By the end of this submission, I hope to have provided a first-hand account of the true reality of a female domestic violence victim in Eire, explaining why abused mothers do not come forward, and why it is essential to look deeply into the matter and address all of the issues, in order to save our children from another generation of these problems.

My Professional Training
Regarding Domestic Violence
I had studied domestic violence in University and thought I had considerable knowledge on the subject. I was wrong. I used to ask myself questions such as, why on earth would a victim stay with her abuser?

Personal Experience
The violence and abuse I experienced began five years into my marriage. There had been no previous indications that my husband was a violent man. The first attack was a blow to the back of the head, leaving me unconscious and with memory loss. I was stunned at this assault on my person. Further assaults were to follow, using hands, fists, growls, threats, and so on. It was only after suffering violent assaults and abuse that I went to the refuge and fully un-
A lot has been written about domestic violence, but still most people only associate it with physical violence, and if the victim has no physical scars, then she is usually deemed a liar when disclosing. This comes from many of the old myths that all women are ‘Eve’ ill liars. Eve tempted Adam and poor Adam could not be blamed for not being able to resist. This remains in the collective conscience to this very day.

“It’s all her fault.”

“She made me do it.”

Studies have found that men who batter their wives also abuse their children in 70% of cases.

The mental, psychological and financial abuse is much more invisible, and takes a trained eye to notice it. Combine this with the victim hiding the abuse through shame, as well as feeling responsible for not having known her partner was violent and abusive from the beginning, and it can be very difficult to get to the truth. The added indoctrination from the Roman Church that women are less evolved than men has not helped the situation in Eire. For example, they see all Irish females as being feeble-minded. Wives must never leave their husbands or his soul will not go to heaven and he will spend eternity in purgatory. Thus, blackmail and threats were used by the Roman Catholic Church to force women and their children to return to violent and abusive husbands.

Taboo
Domestic violence, such as child sexual abuse, is still taboo in Eire, and as a society, we like to keep it hidden from the
outside world (Briginshaw 1938). A principle is used to say a man’s reputation is more important than the female victim or children.

University Of Life – Real Experience Of Family Court
Most of what I was taught in University was not accurate regarding court proceedings. This experience opened my eyes to a whole secret world. A world so medieval, in fact, that it had all the trimmings of the old Inquisition Witch Trials. No one teaching us in University had ever been inside a family court. The ‘in camera’ rule meant – and still means – that most of the professionals and ordinary citizens have no idea of what takes place there. These secret inquisition courts keep the crimes hidden and assist and protect the perpetrator in many ways. Meanwhile, the public are led to believe the secrecy is to protect the family and children. My experience led me from the refuge to a solicitor’s office and alarm bells immediately went off in my head when she advised against mentioning domestic violence and child abuse in court. She explained that the judge was sick to death of hearing cases like mine and that the trend was for male abusers to get full custody of the children. I couldn’t believe my ears, but I insisted she make all the facts known to the judge. I soon found out that she was right, but it all sounded insane.

My Belief In Justice Was Shattered
My recent discussion with a solicitor informed me that the situation in Ireland for abused women is 100 times worse today (2013) than it was twenty years ago, due to the use of junk science, such as ‘Parental Alienation Syndrome’ etc. This was used in my case. It is a theory from a paedophile American psychologist Richard Gardner who believed battered mothers of abused children alienated their children against the abusive father. Again, “It’s all her fault.”

“Battered women are losing custody to their batterers in record numbers.”

tinyurl.com/pkoxnzc

Justice Must Be Seen, To Be Done
I naively thought that ‘in camera’ meant all proceedings were recorded, as they are in other countries. I had no idea that I could be jailed for speaking out regarding my court case – I was threatened with jail for making notes and for mentioning human rights and Strasbourg (the European Court of Human Rights). I had to give an undertaking to the court not to go to Strasbourg. I was then deemed a witch for being too powerful for a woman in Catholic Ireland and for daring to come forward and break free. Again, this is a means of keeping the domestic violence hidden and suppressed. In fact, it suits the perpetrator perfectly; just as he had isolated me from friends etc., now the court was isolating me in its own way. It was a devastating time, as my mind tried to grasp the logic of asking victims to come forward and then using similar tactics on them. All done behind closed doors.

Camilla Cavendish explains this very well and backs up what I experienced, though I did not know of her at the time: “Women who manage to escape domestic violence then find themselves under suspicion and facing a wall of silence.” Camilla Cavendish.

tinyurl.com/lez8su3

Battered At Home, Then By The State
“Battered women get a mixed message from the state”, Cuthbert said. “On the one hand, they are told to leave
their batterers to protect their children. But when they leave, they have to go to family court to resolve issues. The court tells them to maintain relations with this person and to foster a relationship between the children and their abuser. This way, batterers can continue the abuse following separation.”

In our old Irish justice system, all was out in the open and the perpetrator dishonoured.

Once I left the refuge, I was alone and isolated. I was ordered not to speak to the women there again regarding my case. The refuge lady called the probation officer involved in the case to ask why, and he claimed that the court had ordered it. I was told the judge did not like children being in the refuge, so I went to stay with a friend. My entire family felt I was a disgrace to them. It was all about what the neighbours would say. I was made to feel responsible for the actions of my abuser. I knew I was doing the right thing and pushed on regardless. I have not seen any of my family since. This is the price that has to be paid due to our collective view on women daring to leave their criminal husbands.

Assessments – Institutional Grooming
I found it most discriminatory that for every assessment, the perpetrator was invited in first, and I was consequently told that my side of the story was not needed. He was the man, after all. In one assessment, I was ushered out after just five minutes. My abuser had played the charming husband and the victim role, and suddenly, every professional felt sorry for him. Only years later, thanks to other professionals, did I learn about professional grooming and domestic terrorists.

“Institutional grooming refers to the manipulation of professionals who have contact with the victim, so that any allegations of abuse made by the victim are doubted or outright disbelieved. The scary thing about successful institutional grooming is that it substantially increases the harm done to the victims, not only because the abuse they face continues for longer, but because they lose their trust and faith in the world around them, in their family and friends, in the professional people who are meant to protect them, and most tragically, in themselves.”

tinyurl.com/o4ls634

This knowledge led me to realise that all the professionals involved in my case, apart from the refuge staff, did not have the full training to deal with my case and were – knowingly or unknowingly – assisting a criminal.

On researching, I came across Lundy Bancroft, who was writing everything I had experienced.

tinyurl.com/m2cgk5d

How Family Courts Handle Domestic Abuse Allegations
The typical judge, custody evaluator, or divorce mediator – even if he or she has impressive degrees and licenses – has had very little training on domestic abuse, and none at all on abusive men as parents. Instead, court personnel tend to operate on the basis of myth and outdated beliefs, sometimes combined with prejudices against women. Specifically, court personnel and court-appointed evaluators tend to be unaware of the following:

The well-established profile of abusive men, and the fact that these characteristics can have profound implications for their children.

The widespread tendency among abusive men to undermine the mother’s authority and damage her relationships with her children.
The extremely low rate of change in abusive men, except among those who participate for an extended period of time in a specialised group for abusers in combination with criminal prosecution.

The fact that abusive men have far higher rates of physically or sexually abusing children than other men do. The fact that being a target of chronic abuse can leave a woman with many emotional difficulties – and sometimes physical ones as well – which she may need time to heal from.

The tendency of abusive men to abruptly start paying focused attention to their children when they decide to seek custody and the powerful emotional impact this positive attention can have on children who have been traumatised by the man’s abusiveness, and who simultaneously are starved for his approval.

The fact that abusive men usually present themselves as likeable, calm, reasonable people in court, do not seem in any obvious way abusive, and often play the role of hurt, misunderstood victim.

The fact that abusive men are unhealthy role models, and that their children grow up with high rates of involvement in domestic violence themselves, and in other kinds of aggressive or anti-social behaviour. (For some reason, even a man who is physically violent to his partner is not considered a bad role model by most family courts, whereas a drug dealer would be, even though abusers do at least as much damage in society, including causing as many deaths.)

The fact that, for the reasons above, unsupervised or unwanted contact with their woman-abusing fathers impedes children’s recovery.

This lack of information about abuse can be compounded by an active prejudice against women who raise abuse allegations.

When His Eyes Turned White

Human Rights Laws Ignored
I knew from University about human rights and the right to fair hearing, and upon asking, I was duly informed, “we do not have to bother with human rights here. This is how it has always been done in Ireland.”

Article 6 of Human Rights is breached daily because service users are not allowed copies of reports before the courts. I am aware that in 2007 a change was made, but this only allows service users to read the reports in a supervised capacity. In some cases like my own, solicitors are also refused copies of the reports and are unable to represent the victims and rebut the arguments. Victims are thereby denied procedural fairness and the human right to fully present their case in legal proceedings.

At the end of this submission I have included the legal principles to support full disclosure. I have used it, and with the assistance of the Data Commissioner and Attorney General, I got copies of all reports etc. that were put before the court. The excuse for breaching this law, including in my own case, was that the victim might be emotionally abused by reading it as “she is a woman”. Here, we must ask why this old myth of women being emotional is still being used as an excuse. Add to this the training of judges in 2013 to see all Irish women before the courts as “Feeble-Minded”.

tinyurl.com/lawx9oq

A horrifying scene to watch on a daily basis is the perpetrator, his solicitors, barristers, and even some judges further victimising the traumatised victim in court, in the hope that she will retract her accusation and go home and obey. Then the world knows nothing more about it. If the victim cries, she is deemed mentally ill and emotional. If she does not cry, she is deemed a liar and a cold-hearted...
bitch. This bullying and mental torture is a crime in any other circumstances, but not in secret court proceedings.

In my case, I was so traumatised by the violence against the children and myself, that in hindsight, I was not mentally ready for adversarial court proceedings just days after escaping. My solicitor had not prepared me in any way for this harrowing experience, and I therefore presented weak and scatter-minded. My abuser presented well, strong and victim-like. I was ordered to “be a good girl, go home and obey or go homeless, as this is a Catholic country”. He had pulled it off and he enjoyed bragging about it afterwards:

“See, you can never escape me. The law is always on my side.”

In 2012, we heard this same ‘Catholic country’ excuse in the Savita case. Why do we as a society still use this patriarchal excuse to allow women to suffer and die? Also, an attitude prevails that wives and children are under the ‘ownership’ of the husband, as under 19th Century law, women were stated as being among his ‘Goods & Chattels’, and he therefore has the right to treat his possessions in whatever way he chooses.

Evidence from journalist Justine McCarthy at Donegal court in 2006 sheds clear light on the patriarchal mentality of some judges and their belief in old myths, such as all women are ‘Eve’ ill liars and make up domestic violence to get attention.

“There is anecdotal evidence that some of Judge Fitzpatrick’s judicial colleagues are disastrously insensitive. One woman, for instance, was advised by another judge on another occasion to “go home and be a good wife”. As many domestic violence cases, such as applications for safety orders, are heard ‘in camera’, the actual prevalence of this unhelpful paternalistic attitude is unquantifiable. God knows what is being said behind closed doors. There is another highly potent disincentive for victims of domestic violence to pursue their complaints and that is their lack of faith in the justice system.”

tinyurl.com/mrxd9mt

Justine could be writing about my experience here. Notice that the women are placed in the same category as girls.

Trauma

I remember feeling traumatised so much, but it was as if every professional was blind to my feelings. The uprooting of the children and me with no possessions or toys did not seem to be on their radar. I know other women who were literally carried out, so weak and in shock they could hardly move. This was and is seen as a sign of weakness on the victim’s part by most professionals, thus enabling the perpetrator further. No allowance was made for healing and getting my fragmented self back together.

How many women on the streets of Dublin are victims of domestic violence? Made homeless by the system which is paid and legally bound to protect them? I have met some of these women. I was there once myself. I also know domestic violence victims made homeless in 2013. How could that happen? You may ask.

Domestic Violence By Proxy

“Some unfortunate women after years of enduring domestic violence have lost custody to the batterers who abused them. In these cases, batterers have made good on their threat to attack their ex-partner in the place she is the most vulnerable—by taking her children away from her.”

tinyurl.com/y8j9uxt
Perpetrators have developed a pattern of further abusing their victims by using the court and its agents. It was my abuser’s solicitor who assisted him by telling him to play the game: by pretending he cared in front of the judge, and by pretending he wanted custody, he would get our home and everything else. My abuser admitted he did not want custody, as children were women’s work and he only wanted me back to do the work.

On reading Phyllis Chesler, Lundy Bancroft, Barry Goldstein, and Charles Pragnell, I learned about the pattern. On speaking to Charles, I learned that my experience was nothing new. He had heard it all before, the difference in Eire being the breaches of human rights and the old church influence. It was Charles and Dr Lynne Wrennell who inspired me to remain strong and to write.

“Abusive fathers seek custody as a way to avoid paying child support, to pressure his partner to stay or punish her for leaving. Many judges also assume that the father who fights for custody is rare and therefore should be rewarded for loving his children, or they assume that something is wrong with the mother. What may be wrong with the mother is that she and her children are being systematically impoverished, psychologically and legally harassed, and physically battered by the very father who is fighting for custody. In many countries in the world where domestic terrorism is flourishing, male supremacist groups have encouraged abusive fathers to seek custody to pressure or punish his wife. The courts and the often inadequately trained professionals they rely on, glad to see the involvement of fathers in children’s lives, often fail to recognize the tactic and motivation. Courts tend to look at each case separately and so fail to see the patterns of mistakes in these cases.”

tinyurl.com/yc9mpzm

“I understand that this sounds unbelievable. But it is still true. The mothers of raped children, who are also described as “protective” mothers, are seen as guilty of “parental alienation syndrome.” The fact that this concept, first pioneered by Dr. Richard Gardner and widely endorsed by fathers’ rights groups, has been dismissed as junk science does not seem to matter. Most guardians ad litem, parenting counsellors, mediators, lawyers, mental health professionals, and judges still act as if this syndrome were real and mainly find mothers, not fathers, guilty in this regard.”

tinyurl.com/pkoxnzc

Some of these children now speak out in an organisation called ‘Courageous Kids’. They reveal their stories of being placed with their abusers by the court, and how it affected their lives. Often the mothers – the victims – are written out of their children’s lives until they reach adulthood. Their experiences also help us now to see the pattern.

tinyurl.com/k7mnd8t

My children were punished for daring to speak out regarding their abuse. The old mentality that all children are evil liars was clear. They were mentally tortured until they broke down by those paid to protect them. They were threatened with Electric Shock Therapy, being sent to mental institutions, and so on. They were also told that they’d never see their mother or each other ever again. All this for refusing to recant the abuse they suffered. My son was suicidal, but no one in the system cared. Though the ‘Best Interests’ of the child are always quoted, like Hitler and his Best Interest of the Child policy, any abuse is legalised to suit the agenda. I then learned that this threat therapy was in use in other countries and that some
Richard Gardner and his Threat Therapy

Charles Pragnell, advocate for children and families, points out clearly that, “Children are reliable and truthful in their evidence of being abused.”

Now in 2013, I am assured by my solicitor that this breaking down of children happens daily in family court in order to uphold the law regarding the father’s rights! Children are kept in a room with the perpetrator until they break down, give up and go with him, in order to be left alone. This is a crime in any other situation.

“Our only agenda is for courts to use the most up-to-date research available to inform their decisions and make the safety of children the highest priority. We would like to work with judges and other court professionals to provide them with the information that was unavailable thirty years ago, when many of the current practices were first developed.”

Gender Bias And The Myth of Feeble-Minded Irish Women

“They determined that women had intelligence which was less evolved than that of men, and in particular, poor women.”

Most people are aware of Ireland’s discrimination against women, but I had never come across it personally until I entered the legal arena. Augustine taught that suffering was good for women’s souls and beating them to keep them in their place was for their own good. Phyllis Chesler explains it perfectly: “The ideal of fatherhood is sacred. As such, it protects each father from the consequences of his actions.” Poor Adam again!

“The ideal of motherhood is sacred, too. It exposes all mothers as imperfect. No human mother can embody the maternal ideal perfectly enough. No mother was ever legally entitled to custody of her own child. Myths about custody still abound. Most people still believe that the courts favour mothers over fathers—who are discriminated against because they are men—and that this is how it’s always been. This is not true. For more than five thousand years, men—fathers—were legally entitled to sole custody of their children. Women—mothers—were obliged to bear, rear, and economically support their children.”

“Legal Abuse Syndrome”

“LEGAL ABUSE SYNDROME (LAS) is a form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It is a psychic injury, not a mental illness. It is a personal injury that develops in individuals assaulted by ethical violations, legal abuses, betrayals, and fraud. Abuse of power and authority and a profound lack of accountability in our courts have become rampant, compounding an already stressful experience. Whatever the court setting, whether it is regarding divorce, child custody, parental support, probate matters, personal injury, property disputes, legal or medical malpractice, criminal charges or other deeply personal issues, the frauds put forth in our courts add greatly to the trauma.
Myths about Domestic Violence

“MYTH #1: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AFFECTS ONLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION AND IS RARE.
FACT: National studies estimate that 3 to 4 million women are beaten each year in our country. A study conducted in 1995 found that 31% of women surveyed admitted to having been physically assaulted by a husband or boyfriend. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between the ages of 15 and 44 in our country, and the FBI estimates that a woman is beaten every 15 seconds. Thirty per cent of female homicide victims are killed by partners or ex-partners and 1,500 women are murdered as a result of domestic violence each year in the United States.

MYTH #2: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OCCURS ONLY IN POOR, UNEDUCATED AND MINORITY FAMILIES.
FACT: Studies of domestic violence consistently have found that battering occurs among all types of families, regardless of income, profession, region, ethnicity, educational level or race. However, the fact that lower income victims and abusers are over-represented in calls to police, battered women’s shelters and social services may be due to a lack of other resources.

MYTH #3: THE REAL PROBLEM IS COUPLES WHO ASSAULT EACH OTHER. WOMEN ARE JUST AS VIOLENT AS MEN.
FACT: A well-publicised study conducted by Dr. Murray Strauss at the University of New Hampshire found that women use violent means to resolve conflict in relationships as often as men. However, the study also concluded that when the context and consequences of an assault are measured, the majority of victims are women. The U.S.
Department of Justice has found that 85% of the victims of spouse abuse are female. Men can be victims, but it is rare.

MYTH #4: ALCOHOL ABUSE CAUSES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

FACT: Although there is a high correlation between alcohol – or other substance abuse – and battering, it is not a causal relationship. Batterers use drinking as one of many excuses for their violence and as a way to place the responsibility for their violence elsewhere. Stopping the abusers’ drinking will not stop the violence. Both battering and substance abuse need to be addressed separately, as overlapping yet independent problems.

MYTH #5: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS USUALLY A ONE TIME, ISOLATED OCCURRENCE.

FACT: Battering is a pattern of coercion and control that one person exerts over another. Battering is not just one physical attack. It includes the repeated use of a number of tactics, including intimidation, threats, economic deprivation, isolation, and psychological and sexual abuse. Physical violence is just one of these tactics. The various forms of abuse utilised by batterers help to maintain power and control over their spouses and partners.

MYTH #6: MEN WHO BATTER ARE OFTEN GOOD FATHERS AND SHOULD HAVE JOINT CUSTODY OF THEIR CHILDREN IF THE COUPLE SEPARATES.

FACT: Studies have found that men who batter their wives also abuse their children in 70% of cases. Even when children are not directly abused, they suffer as a result of witnessing one parent assault another. Batterers often display an increased interest in their children at the time of separation, as a means of maintaining contact with, and thus control over, their partners.

MYTH #7: WHEN THERE IS VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY, ALL MEMBERS OF THE FAMILY ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE DYNAMIC, AND THEREFORE, ALL MUST CHANGE FOR THE VIOLENCE TO STOP.

FACT: Only the batterer has the ability to stop the violence. Battering is a behavioural choice for which the batterer must be held accountable. Many battered women make numerous attempts to change their behaviour in the hope that this will stop the abuse. This does not work. Changes in family members’ behaviour will not cause the batterer to be non-violent.

MYTH #8: BATTERED WOMEN ARE MASOCHISTIC AND PROVOKE THE ABUSE. THEY MUST LIKE IT OR THEY WOULD LEAVE.

FACT: Victim provocation is no more common in domestic violence than in any other crime. Battered women often make repeated attempts to leave violent relationships, but are prevented from doing so by increased violence and control tactics on the part of the abuser. Other factors which inhibit a victim’s ability to leave include economic dependence, few viable options for housing and support, unhelpful responses from the criminal justice system or other agencies, social isolation, cultural or religious constraints, a commitment to the abuser and the relationship and fear of further violence. It has been estimated that the danger to a victim increases by 70% when she attempts to leave, as the abuser escalates his use of violence when he begins to lose control.

MYTH #9: MEN HAVE A RIGHT TO DISCIPLINE THEIR PARTNERS FOR MISBEHAVING. BATTERING IS NOT A CRIME.

FACT: While our society derives from a patriarchal legal system that afforded men the right to physically chastise
their wives and children, we do not live under such a system now. Women and children are no longer considered the property of men, and domestic violence is a crime in every state in the country.”

tinyurl.com/d8bbdnu

How Governments Help Keep Women Trapped In Abusive Relationships
“Governments may talk about equality, but their housing, income, employment, education, criminal justice, immigration, health, home care and child care policies help keep women trapped in abusive relationships. Governments could become a part of the solution, but at this time, they are actively and lethally perpetuating the problem. Women do not lie about sexual assault any more than anyone might lie about having been robbed or other criminal acts committed against them. In fact, one quarter of sexually assaulted women never tell anyone at all about the assault. Reporting sexual assault can be almost as traumatic as the sexual assault itself. Women and girls need to be supported and believed.” In Eire this is achieved through the divorce laws which states: “In order to successfully obtain a Decree of Divorce from an Irish Court, it is necessary to satisfy the Court that: At the date of the commencement of the proceedings, the spouses have lived apart for four out of the five previous years.”

tinyurl.com/mk72xhm

So the victim and children are forced by law to remain with the abuser under the same roof. If her name is on the deeds of the property, she is not entitled to any assistance and is stuck with the perpetrator. My own Community welfare officer at the time explained that it is a Government agenda to keep up appearances like the old church did, that we have no DV problem in Eire, and to keep women in their place. This law often means that victims will not come forward for fear of homelessness and so remain trapped along with any children of the union. Homelessness also gives the state the right to remove the children into care. I was also threatened with this.

Child Protection
Guardians are trained to believe that once the victim and children are out, then the violence is over and the children are safe with the perpetrator. Again, the victim is suddenly expected to move on as if nothing had happened and forgive him. The system asked us to come forward on one hand, and the moment we were in court, it said we have to make up and actually visit the perpetrator physically, including taking the children to him – because of the perpetrator’s rights. That’s the law.

It is the law at the moment, but abused women expect justice and law is not justice. My children remarked at the perpetrator being rewarded – that is how they saw it. He beats them etc. and now he gets to drag them off alone and scare them with no one to protect them. I remember the children feeling let down because I could not protect them and could not understand that a learned judge would dream of placing them in danger to suffer all over again. The judge in our case did apologise, knowing what he had ordered was wrong, but stated he had to obey the law and the assessor. I could not believe what I heard, considering he was the judge and was not taking responsibility for the welfare of the children.

Why Don’t We End Domestic Violence?
With all the media hype around domestic violence, why is Eire one of only two western European countries that
haven’t signed an international agreement that would protect women and girls from violence, including domestic violence? For Eire, it will take an entire change in attitude towards women to begin with. Women’s work is valued at 0 for mothering and homemaking. For other jobs outside the home women are still paid less. This is a slave mentality. The old patriarchal mentality needs to be purged from Eire as we return to our ancient equality. Also, there is a lot of money to be made from domestic violence by solicitors, and others involved in this cottage industry. Expert witnesses, psychologists etc. line their pockets at the expense of the suffering of the abused and their children.

“Domestic violence is not inevitable. It can be prevented. Our daughters and granddaughters can grow up in a world in which domestic violence crimes are rare. The worst crime would be if we take the knowledge, research and ability we have to substantially reduce domestic violence crimes and instead find some excuse to force women and children to continue to suffer.”

tinyurl.com/majlynq

Media
The media also assists in perpetuating violence against women, creating the illusion that abused women like the violence and are just as violent as men. A rise in female violence on men may rise from 1 to 2, thus creating a 100% increase, which is then splashed all over the media, giving a false impression. In the link below, Lundy Bancroft looks at Rihanna and how the media portray her as if she loves the abuse.

tinyurl.com/mzlzcq5

Recommendations

1. The court proceedings must be open to the public like other countries. Names can be easily anonymised.

tinyurl.com/kuyj8vd

2. All proceedings need to be recorded like other countries. This would keep the process transparent and those service providers who are uneducated regarding domestic violence could be removed for training. It would also bring an end to abusing the victims in secret. It would shame the perpetrator. If the Irish public could hear what goes on in secret family court hearings, they would be appalled.

3. All orders are to be written down. I will make a note at this point to clarify that not all court orders are written down in family courts. You cannot appeal later on without the order in writing. Traumatised victims are easy to legally abuse as all professionals know. Professionals worldwide cannot believe how our Irish family courts operate.

4. Copies of all reports are to be made available to all service users in accordance with Article 6 of Human Rights.

tinyurl.com/opp2y2b


tinyurl.com/qhj4hfo

The concept of a fair trial also implies in principle the right for the parties to a trial to have knowledge of and comment
on all evidence adduced or observations filed. That right means, in principle, the opportunity for the parties to a criminal or civil trial to have knowledge of and comment on all evidence adduced or observations filed, even by an independent member of the national legal service, with a view to influencing the court’s decision. The Court finds that this fact in itself amounts to a breach of Article 6 para. 1 (art.6-1).

5. Media. The media must also take responsibility for creating the illusion that abused women enjoy violence.

6. Perpetrators of domestic violence should be removed from the family home and the victims and children allowed to remain. This would mean a huge financial saving and less disruption and trauma for the victims and their children. We could have ‘holding facilities’ for the perpetrators who could still go to work etc. in the day.

7. Training should be mandatory for all agents of the Family Court system to bring them up to date with the latest research etc. Garda should be trained to take domestic violence more seriously with specialised DV units.

Barry Goldstein already welcomes the opportunity to come to Eire and share his expertise with us: “These talking points were designed for domestic violence advocates and other allies of protective mothers to speak with administrative judges in the hopes of convincing them to use the research contained in the new book to train judges and other court professionals and reform custody practices to improve the safety and potential of children in domestic violence custody cases.” Abuser Tactics. “The court system has been very slow to recognize this tactic and instead frequently use approaches that collude with abusers to help them maintain control over their ex-partners. Frequent mistakes in these cases have resulted in thousands of children being sent to live with abusers” (see Zorza, Fields and Goldstein).

http://tinyurl.com/obokrwg

Conclusion
From personal experience and from meeting other victims of domestic violence, male and female alike, I conclude that a lot of work needs to be done to bring Eire out of the dark patriarchal age and into the 21st century. All of our old beliefs and myths need to be looked at and questioned to see if they fit into our modern society.

I have lifted the veil above to reveal the true and sad reality that the old “punish the victim” mentality is still alive and well in Eire. There is a similarity to Hypathia of old, where killing the strong woman in one way is not enough, but the entire system joins in to tear her limb from limb mentally, emotionally, and physically. Sadly, some agents of the state – who are paid to assist the victims of domestic violence – despise them, and often derive sadistic pleasure in seeing them ripped apart in secret courts.

There is a difference between the Mediaeval Witch Trials and the modern day Family Courts: witch trials were open for the public to attend. There the dissimilarity ends. It is clear that victims of domestic violence are too traumatised to know what the whole court process is about. Most are dazed and exhausted and present badly to the judge, and are therefore judged accordingly. Meanwhile, the perpetrator presents well and thrives on the secrecy and the adversarial atmosphere of the court. Victims of domestic violence need proper preparation before dragging them into courtrooms like lambs to the slaughter. Because the
public are not allowed into these old style Dark Age courts, they are clueless to the reality. However, once the ‘game’ begins in court proceedings, the victims are mere pawns while the solicitors etc. are the real players, feeding off the domestic violence cottage industry.

We must prioritise domestic violence in every way possible, due to the harsh reality that Eire is 100 times worse now in 2013 for female domestic violence victims than it was twenty years ago, due to the perpetrators’ success in using the patterns I outlined above. What will the children of Eire think of us in twenty more years’ time if our courts and state agents keep rewarding the perpetrators and punishing the victims due to a lack of proper training?

Let us hope that this submission has lifted the veil sufficiently, that drastic action is taken immediately, and that my children’s words, “the only women they listen to, Mum, are dead women”, become a thing of the past.

Catherine Ni Mhuillin. BA, HDipEd, TTG

Acknowledgements

With deep gratitude I wish to thank every person who came into my life and supported my children and I during our experience in escaping domestic terrorism and legal abuse.

No words can suffice how much I appreciate you all.

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