

My Mother, My Hero: A personal reflection on domestic violence

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Imagine being seven years old, sitting at home on New Year's Eve, and watching your father keep drinking alcohol and smoking his pipe like nothing else in the world mattered. He did not want to be bothered with either of the children as they were expected to stay in their rooms until their mother got home.

I had no idea that this was going to be a night I would never forget. My mother came home forty-five minutes late because she had a drink with one of her friends when she got off work. My father did not think that was right and the second he heard her car pull into the driveway he ran outside after her. My mother rolled the window down thinking she was going to receive a pleasant greeting and a New Year's kiss. Instead, she was pulled out through the window by her hair and dragged inside the house. He immediately threw her into the wall and would not stop hitting or kicking her. I told my brother to stay in his room and I went down there yelling at him to stop.

He stopped only for enough time to run to the kitchen for another beer while my mother and I had ran upstairs and locked the bedroom door. I picked up the phone and called 911 as I heard my father trying to beat down the door to get to us. I will never forget the look in my mother's eyes at that point. She was crying and scared, and I just hoped she could hang on long enough for help to arrive. It only took a couple seconds before my father had pushed through the door, pulled her out by her hair, and dragged her down the stairs.

I was relieved when I heard the doorbell. My father threatened me not to open the door, but I did and saved my mother's life that night. I remember my father sitting on the porch being interviewed by the police. He just looked at me, then asked me to go get his slippers so he did not have to go to jail barefoot. My dad was taken to jail, and my mom was sent to the hospital with several broken ribs, arm, and toes. It hurt so bad seeing my mother in so much pain, but at

least it was over and she would be safe. My mom held my brother and me, and thanked God that we were unharmed.

My father only spent one night in jail and was released the next day. With no previous convictions, and no murder, they decided they had nothing to hold him on. The police told my mother that she could get a restraining order, but what good is a piece of paper if my dad really wanted her dead? We were all scared when we heard of his seemingly soon release. Luckily, my dad voluntarily went to counseling and Alcoholics Anonymous classes to regain his life. He was very remorseful, and I truly believe he regrets this night every day of his life. But not all women are as lucky as my mother was. Many men get out of jail and come back to finish what they started.

Domestic situations put children in a bad place. I felt like I was supposed to hate my father for what he did to my mom that night. I had always loved my dad, and was “daddy’s little girl.” I felt like New Year’s was just a bad nightmare that could not have really happened. The courts did not tell us kids we could not see him, and neither did our mother. He was still the father of my brother and I, and she would not deprive him of that.

No one should have to see someone they love getting abused by someone they also loved and trusted. I thought my mom was going to die that night...so did she. She was just telling me how much she loved me, and that she was going to try and hold on as long as she could through all the abuse.

Wives are much more likely to be slain by their husbands when separated from them than when co-residing...One implication is that threats which begin “If you ever leave me...” must be taken seriously. Women who stay with their abusive husbands because they are afraid to leave may correctly apprehend that departure would elevate or spread the risk of lethal assault. As one Chicago wife, a victim of numerous beatings by her husband, explained to a friend who asked why she didn’t leave her husband, “I can’t because he’ll kill us all, and he’s going to kill me.” He did. (Belknap, The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice 1995: 319)

I look back on that New Year's Eve and it seems surreal. I am now twenty-five years old, and eighteen years ago really seems like yesterday. I could never picture how my life would have been without my mother. She is my best friend and the person I admire most in this world. I am so proud of her for having the strength to get away from an abusive husband because not all women do.

My father went through a series of treatment programs when he was released from prison. He chose being a father over an abuser, and realized that nothing was bad enough to hurt his family. My father has now been off drugs and alcohol for eighteen years. We have all forgiven him for that night. Even though my parents are no longer together, they will always have that bond of being my parents. Respect and forgiveness have made my father a strong man and now a positive force helping guide me through life. My dad's imperfections and my mother's strength made me the strong and determined person I am today. Because of him, I want to spend my life prosecuting batterers. I think about that night every day of my life. I have never been able to bury the memories, but I am thankful I did not have to bury my mother.

Round Two

A few years later my mom was introduced to my stepdad. He took such good care of my mom and us kids. The first six months of their marriage we all had a great time traveling and building a life together. It would have been impossible at that point to see that my mom must be attracted to abusive men. He never laid a hand on any of us, but was emotionally abusive. He would talk to you, and yell until you felt like you were nothing. His orders were to be followed at all times or he would slam the counter and throw chairs around. My seventh grade summer, I remember watching my friends play in front of the house with all the children from the neighborhood. I was locked in my bedroom for three months because he felt like my attitude

was getting between my mom and his relationship. He stripped my room of phone and television as well. Needless to say, I could not wait until school started back in August. For a seventh grader, that is the ultimate definition of cruel and unusual punishment.

My Father's Son

I believe the person that suffered most through all of this is my brother. He never had a positive male role model in his life. Somewhere between playing high school baseball, and my mom's second divorce, he found he liked drugs and alcohol just as my father had.

February 9, 2010 was what I thought was going to be a fun night out for my mom's birthday. I have never been so scared in my life as I was that night. Little did I know that the night was going to end with my mom crying hysterically, and fearing for her son's life.

My brother cooked a gourmet meal for my mother and me early in the evening before she had to go to work. We decided to go play some poker while my mom was dealing to keep her company and make her birthday better being surrounded by her family. My brother got to the casino a few hours before I did. I saw a drink in his hand when I arrived but had not realized he was about two shots of Jagermeister away from a drunken, alcoholic rage. About an hour after I got to the casino, I overheard my brother a few tables up cursing at some older woman that had beat him in a poker pot. He immediately starts mumbling and screaming as he storms out with another drink after he lost all the money he had on him. I felt embarrassed for my mom as that was her place of work and also a day she should not have to stress.

Several minutes passed and my brother was nowhere to be found. In his blackout stage, he thought he was invincible. I finally reached him on the telephone and he told me he proceeded to drive to the casino next door where he was formerly employed in the valet department. Lucky enough, the valet manager gave me his keys. I did not want him to hurt

himself or anyone else. After a couple hours trying to get him to get in the car so I could take him home he finally stopped screaming for a brief moment to get in the car. My mom was so torn up that she went home, and told her I could take care of my brother.

The drive home seemed like a scene out of a movie. My brother had two screwdrivers in the car that he had just purchased. He started waving them around like machetes and stabbing his windshield while I was driving. I passed several police in the meantime and was shocked that they missed a crazy person in the passenger seat trying to kick out the windshield. What might have saved us from getting in an accident was he finally passed out. The sad part is that he did not remember anything that happened and is unable to take responsibility for not being able to handle his liquor.

My mom kept apologizing to me for having to go through such a traumatic night because she had done the same thing with my father. There is no doubt that my brother's alcoholism was a genetic trait passed down from my father. My dad has been clean for eighteen years, but it took him hitting rock bottom and losing his family to realize that it was life or the bottle. There is no reasoning with my brother. People like that have to want to get help- it cannot be forced upon them. I am really scared that my brother will not stop until he is dead or in jail.

Afterword

I wrote this paper for myself because dealing with family member's alcoholism has been such a big part of my life. I have learned to keep things bottled up inside, and not to trust anyone, or feel anything.