

Singing in the Storm

**The voice of sufferers and
survivors of domestic abuse**

Many thanks to everyone who has helped with the production of this anthology and in particular to Celia Brayfield for her introduction and to Rachel Watson, whose original idea this was.

This anthology of poetry is dedicated to the victims and survivors of domestic abuse who have shared their poems with us.

Foreword

Every day thousands of people on the Isle of Wight, predominantly women and children, live with domestic abuse. Anyone can experience domestic abuse regardless of race, ethnic or religious group, class, disability or lifestyle. Domestic abuse occurs in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender relationships. Domestic abuse can be perpetrated by other family members and in some cases, older children are abusive towards their parents.

Despite the range of abuse and reported perpetrators, crime statistics and research consistently demonstrate that domestic abuse is gendered – that is, it is most commonly experienced by women and perpetrated by men, particularly when there is a pattern of serious physical assaults, or when it includes rape or sexual assault or results in injury or death.

As many as one in four women will experience domestic abuse during their lifetime, and at least two women a week die as a result. Whilst men also experience domestic abuse, the abuse does not generally form a pattern of controlling and coercive behavior. Among same sex couples, however, research is now showing us that partner abuse is as common and as severe as it is among heterosexual couples. We also know that thousands of children witness domestic abuse every year – and we know the damage this does.

Last year 1,416 domestic abuse incidents were recorded on the Island by Hampshire Constabulary. In 225 of these recorded incidents the victim was deemed to be at high risk of significant harm or murder. We know that these reported incidents represent the tip of the iceberg as the vast majority of victims never disclose the abuse they are suffering. That is why raising awareness of the issues across all communities on the Isle of Wight continues to be so important.

During the compilation of this anthology we have been contacted by many survivors of domestic abuse – some of whom are still living in abusive relationships, and who have never told anyone their stories before. Their courage and resilience is an inspiration to us, it highlights how important awareness raising is and it makes us determined to keep on campaigning on this issue.

This anthology is a tribute to them.

Introduction by Celia Brayfield

First a tribute to the poets, women who have courageously worked with the most difficult and painful of emotions to produce this inspiring collection. Yes, writing can be therapeutic; there is a sense of gaining control of overwhelming feelings by pinning them down on a page, but the process is never easy and many are never able to articulate the complex and troubling thoughts that come with suffering.

To the outsider, of course, these feelings are unknown and, worse, domestic abuse itself is hard to understand. Why does she stay? Why does he do it? How can love go so terribly wrong? The couple, the happy home, the bond from which our future will spring, is such a cherished ideal of perfection that we are reluctant to admit that the relationship can turn toxic. But it does. And that is why this anthology is so precious, because in these hard-won words we can begin to understand what happens when a relationship goes bad.

There is no self-pity here, but pride in survival, a theme in most of these poems, especially in *Animal*, *Black and Blue*, *Goodbye*, and *On the Brink*. The writers acknowledge their lost years but are hopeful and confident as they look forward, stronger because they have come to their own rescue. They are triumphant as they reclaim their lives.

Some of the poems, such as *Skin Colours* and *The Act*, acknowledge the tangle of emotions which the writers have unpicked, the irrational guilt and transferred blame. It's notable that none of these writers refer to the undeniable social pressure that persists in holding the man-and-wife identity so sacred that the victims of abuse struggle to find support in their families and communities.

How does it start? Many of the writers remember the hope and happiness of the early days, when they felt that they measured up to that glossy picture of the perfect couple. They write with passion and nostalgia of the good times, and then of the struggle to keep up the façade and show the world a smiling face, in *The Happy Couple* and *The Secret*.

Many of the poems are eloquent in describing the experiences of emotional abuse, describing words as “weapons of destruction” and giving us a picture of one person annihilated by another with a methodical infliction of criticism. *Target Practice*, *The Zone*, *Misery*, and *Why* all evoke the erosion of human spirit in the victims of mental cruelty. Sometimes a single incident has stayed with the writer. *Letterbox*, written from the viewpoint of a child in a violent home, remembers in sharp detail a fragment of the daily nightmare.

There is endurance here, worthy of a medal, the ability to find grace under the hardest pressure, sketched in a few lines in *Chips* and explored thoughtfully in *Our Home Should be a Castle*. And, against all odds, there is charity and understanding in *Words* and *Try Again*.

But for others, the pain was physical and the feelings of sheer terror dominate. The cyclical nature of abuse is a shared theme. Again and again, the click of the garden gate, the scrape of the key in the lock, triggering terrible apprehension. In *Common Rape*, *Dark Dark Dark* and *Fear* the writers share with us the particular terror of a home that has become a trap rather than a sanctuary. *Self-Worth* and *What If* speak of the bleak despair of the victims, while *Animal* conjures up the rage that finally gives the victim power.

The writers have chosen many different forms, from simple rhymes or prose sketches to the originality and depth of *Drowning in Air* and the confident song lyrics of *The Last Time*.

Taken together, these poems are a heroic testament by women who have invited us to share their darkest hours. They map their journeys from hope and happiness to fear, self-doubt and despair, and then through anger and determination to hope once more.

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ABC of agony

Do you know this ABC?

Read the words and you will see

Just how hard it is to be happy

Like I used to be.

Anger Bully Control Devious Evil Forceful

Gloating Harsh Insensitive Jealous Killjoy

Liar Manipulative Narcissistic Obsessive

Patronising Questioning Resentful Selfish

Thoughtless Unkind Vindictive Wicked

X-asperating Yo-yo Zero-tolerance.

I compiled this alphabet in this way

To help me through each day

And wonder why I deserve to be treated this way,

By a man who's so self-absorbed with his

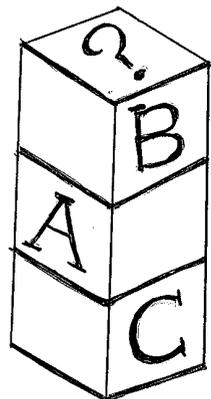
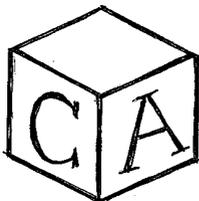
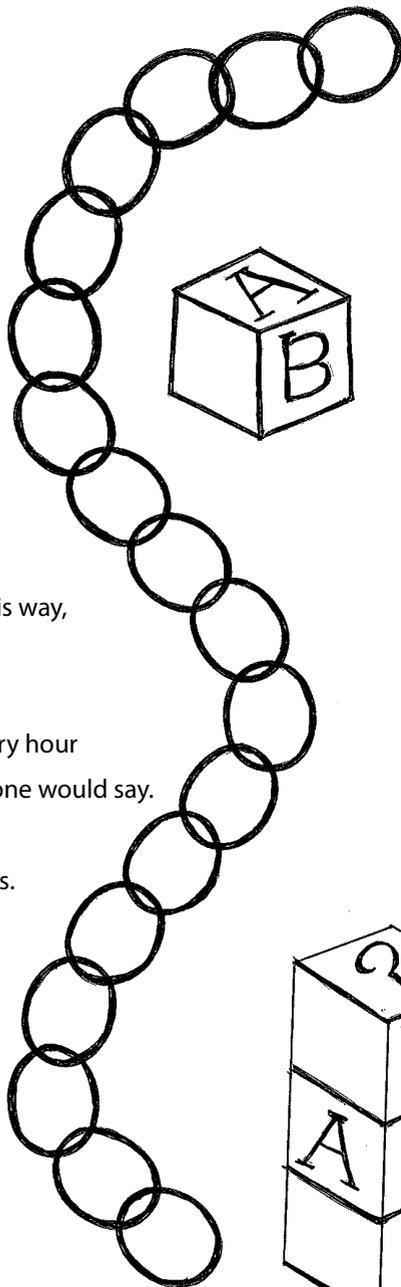
Own self-importance and power

That he thinks he's so perfect each and every hour

Of each and every day, cold and uncaring, one would say.

And he's blind to the needs and feelings

Of the people around him – mere earthlings.



Animal

You are an animal for that I see
A person in furs that runs truly free
You feed off the young
And off of the power
You believe yourself king
You're simply a coward.

And why is it that, only I can see
You repugnant, loathsome excuse for a being.

That grin it shines with pearly whites
Yet I know what vile smile is behind
You think yourself a martyr, smarter, wiser than me.

But I am flourishing, fast growing and free
It is me you will see when your end comes to knowledge
I have the power to make you be seen
I am the forest, my eyes are the seasons
I will be the one to make known your treasons.

Black and blue are hurtful colours

Black and blue are hurtful colours, hands and fists are weapons, survive and thrive don't dwell and hide get out and fight for your life. You could be someone's perfect wife there is a life believe in your life stay safe and thrive x

Chips

We sat eating chips sitting on the seawall. Like kids really. No sharing. He bought two portions. Mine had too much salt. I could feel it burning my throat. Eat them. Eat the chips. I could not spoil this. He says I spoil everything. So much salt it felt like grit in my mouth. I wondered if he had done it on purpose.

Later we had sex. He expected it. He had taken me out. Given me a nice time. When he was asleep. I went to the bathroom and vomited quietly.

Common Rape

You smacked me,
Attacked me
And ripped my clothes off.

You bit me,
Unzipped me
And broke my womb.

You are my be-friender,
First boyfriend;
My dodgy 'uncle',
Shadow stalking stranger,
My memory vows.
Soldier with battle fatigue,
Punter
And player.

Dark Dark Dark

Dark dark dark

Fear fear fear

Don't come near

Another shed tear

Jump jump jump

Thump thump thump

Keep alive

I will survive

Flight flight flight

Light...

Domestic

Don't split my face with your blue black anger.
Rage ravenous eyes scorch and blister.
Your curdled tongue, whisky infused.
Slaver spitting insults as black as the coal you seamed.

I straddle you,
Pin your sovereign dressed fingers
Smashing my fist into your slackened face.
A woman's fist, as broad as the coal shovel;
Textured like the nappies i bleached beyond white.
The ECT of my past surges, switched on.
A controlled strength, crackling.
I could crack your skull wide open.

Drowning in Air

And I can't breathe anymore
Or swim from your pool
Or dive from myself
I have to stay put.

Knocked out before I fall
Splinters gouge
As I endeavour to slide
From my oblique diving board.

They fester, those splinters
And I submit to silence
You press on me
And I drip like a sponge.

I test the bounce in full feather
The plank feels yielding
Just when I think you are sleeping
You unbolt an eye.

Three cuts and it splits
My diving board to autonomy
Three cuts and splinters turn to stakes.

You've drained the pool
So now when I leap
The bottom repels me
And my head cries blood.

Fear

Everyday the click of the garden gate.

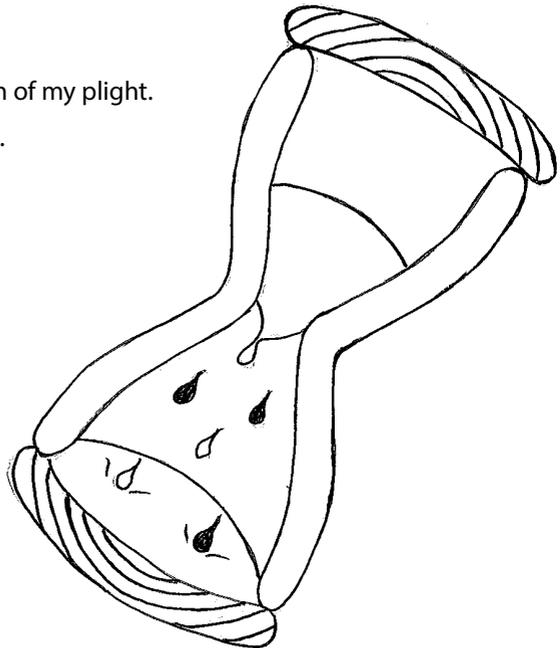
The fear
watching him stumble down the garden path.

So drunk
his tongue flicking in and out
he enters the kitchen
and urinates in the sink.
When asked 'what are you doing?'
he replies 'It's my house'.

I was his wife for 31 years.

Goodbye

The time has come for me to leave
And .. will you begin to grieve
For all the lost love that we should have shared?
But you couldn't have cared
Less about my feelings then.
You were angry, sulky and unkind,
You played nasty games with my mind.
I was frightened of your reaction
To what I did or said.
I thought it was all in my head.
I wanted to walk out the door
But I was in relationship ambivalence,
Until the realisation of my situation became clear and made sense,
You'd sucked dry my confidence
And I was tired and tense,
Then I made my decision...
The time had come for recognition of my plight.
I had to dismiss you from my sight.
I shall be strong.
Goodbye – so long.



The Last Time

The first time our eyes met we both knew
I was the one for you
The first time your hand touched my face
the room caught fire
The first time your lips covered mine
all reason vanished
But baby this isn't the first time
you promised that it was the last time
You're a liar

Now I'm hiding at 3am
wondering how we got here
As soon as I heard the door slam
I hit the floor
Now my head is spinning
it's spinning right back to reason
Oh Baby I just cant stay here
anymore

(Bridge) I realize for the first time in my life
this can't be what it means to be a wife
Then I remember what Mama said
while she lay dying on her bed

(Chorus) *She said* "Jesus died so you wouldn't have to
He was badly beaten so you wouldn't bleed
He came to my rescue, but I wouldn't let Him in
there's a time when we all have to choose
stand in judgment when you've stood in my shoes"

Her words were the piece of the puzzle
that didn't ever seem to make sense
Why does love have to hurt?
Will I wind up like her-
All battered and alone in the end?

At that moment you turned on a bright light
I knew I was too weak to fight
with those thoughts in my head
I rose up from the dead
and these are the words that I said

(Chorus) Jesus died so I wouldn't have to
He was badly beaten so I wouldn't bleed
He came to my rescue- I'm leaving
Now get out of my way
'cause my life starts today
I thank God that it isn't too late.

Letterbox

It wasn't all bad. There were carefree days when moods were good and the rows would stop. I would feel the calmness like warm sunshine creeping slowly over my skin. Mum would hum tunes as she made the evening meal; dad would read the paper and sip tea instead of cider.

But Dad would tire of playing happy families. Even the circular motion of Mum's blue cloth on the floor tiles would make him flip. He'd kick over the bucket, and slam out of the house making the security chain rattle. Later, if Mum asked him where he'd been, he'd drag her to the front door by her hair and lock her out.

"Daddy, I can hear Mummy at the letterbox."

"It's only the wind."

"But I can see the tips of her fingers and bleeding nails."

"You're dreaming. Go back to bed."

"Why are Mummy's eyes staring through the letterbox?"

"Because Mummy was naughty. Go back to bed."

The letterbox would creak shut and I'd go to my room and look out at the dark and cry.

By morning, Mum would be in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Little white plasters on her fingertips, her hair pulled down to cover a bruised cheek.

It was a relief when Dad sobered up. He'd dance around the lounge and make us laugh with his crazy chicken steps. There'd be penny sweets in a white paper bag. When Mum ate one, it must've been painful to chew, as tiny frown lines kept appearing between her brows. Dad would encourage me to climb onto his knee for a hug. He said how much he loved us. I tried not to glance at Mum as I slid my arms around his neck. I'd tell myself that the night before had been a bad, bad dream.



Misery

Miserable and unhappy
Is the life I lead,
Suffering from your criticism
Every minute of every hour.
Reality is so hard to bear
Your nastiness – I am beyond care.

But I carry on from day to day
Wishing I was some place else, away from you.
What can I do to end this misery?

If I answer back, I'm told I over-react,
So I say nothing and cry silently, that's a fact.
But I'm in a no-win situation
And so I sigh in resignation,
And grit my teeth in determination
To make tomorrow a better day,
And think of something appropriate to say,
To try and end this misery.

On the brink

Can't you see what you are doing to me?
Squeezing out my life's blood drop by drop,
Now there's nothing left and I'm not alive anymore.
There's pain in the emptiness for sure,
A burning ache of wretchedness where joy and love used to be.
I can no longer endure the agony,
I am on the brink of despair.
Suddenly... in the darkness a glimmer of light flickers and tries to burn.
Deep down I want to return from the edge of sadness
And my heart fills with gladness
As I soar up towards the light... higher... floating free.
I feel tranquil and calm.
The peace in those precious moments feels like balm.
I no longer fear you.
I know what to do.
I stand up straight, it's not too late
To walk forward with all my might.
I've got a second chance
And for that, I give thanks.

‘Our Home Should Be A Castle; Mine Is A Hell-Hole’

If you beat me do I not bleed?

If I cry out will you stop the blows?

Your terrible anger is spilling over into all our lives.

I must go now, the children too.

Staying is a slow death of the love we once shared.

I cannot recognise you in the monster I see before me.

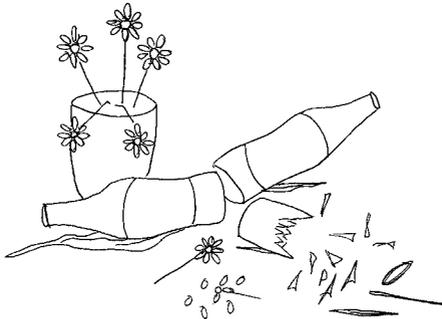
Why oh why is this happening to us?

The river is running with my tears,
the walls echo with the sound of blows
as you beat me with your hands.

Our tiny children huddle down in their beds
trying not to hear my cries for peace.

This must stop here and now before ever further terror descends on us.

You say you love me so please,
please, let me go. Now and quickly.



Questions

What's that?

The scrape of a key in the lock.

My stomach tied in knots which will not loosen.

No, please, not yet.

How far away can I get?

Not far.

Not far.

If I'm asleep perhaps...

I'll pretend to be asleep.

He's getting closer

What can I do?

What can I do?

I'm leaving in the morning, I tell myself

But I really know I can't.

I know

I know

How can I do it? Where can I go?

I hear the bedroom door slam.

No more, no please, no more.

Oh God, no more.

Self-worth

First of all you feel angry,
Next comes the helplessness, the hurt,
And then the humiliation.
Followed by the condemnation
Of your feelings as a person.
Your nose has been rubbed in the dirt.
How can he dole out such cruelty?
It's a slap in the face
And you feel like you've been hurled into space,
Spiralling in a black hole,
Losing every part of your soul,
It's out of your control.
But then you dare to feel aware
That you're worth more than you think.
And you edge back from the brink.
Slowly your togetherness is coming back.
You put your life back on track,
Casting the negative thoughts behind you,
Smiling – and knowing it's the best way to do.

Skin colours

It was for my own good
You said as your hand
Fell heavily, leaving purple/red
Stains on pink woman flesh

Should I learn from such violence?
Oh yes but lessons best forgotten
As pain stripped away fragile dignity,
Stabbing more deeply than skin should allow.

Through fear I learned to obey,
Trusting deceit as protection.
You never tamed this spirit
And the flame burns ever angry.

Yet I am still cowed,
waiting for your hand to fall,
longing to escape, to dream in other colours.
Why can I forgive you and not myself

So often that happy couple aren't what they seem

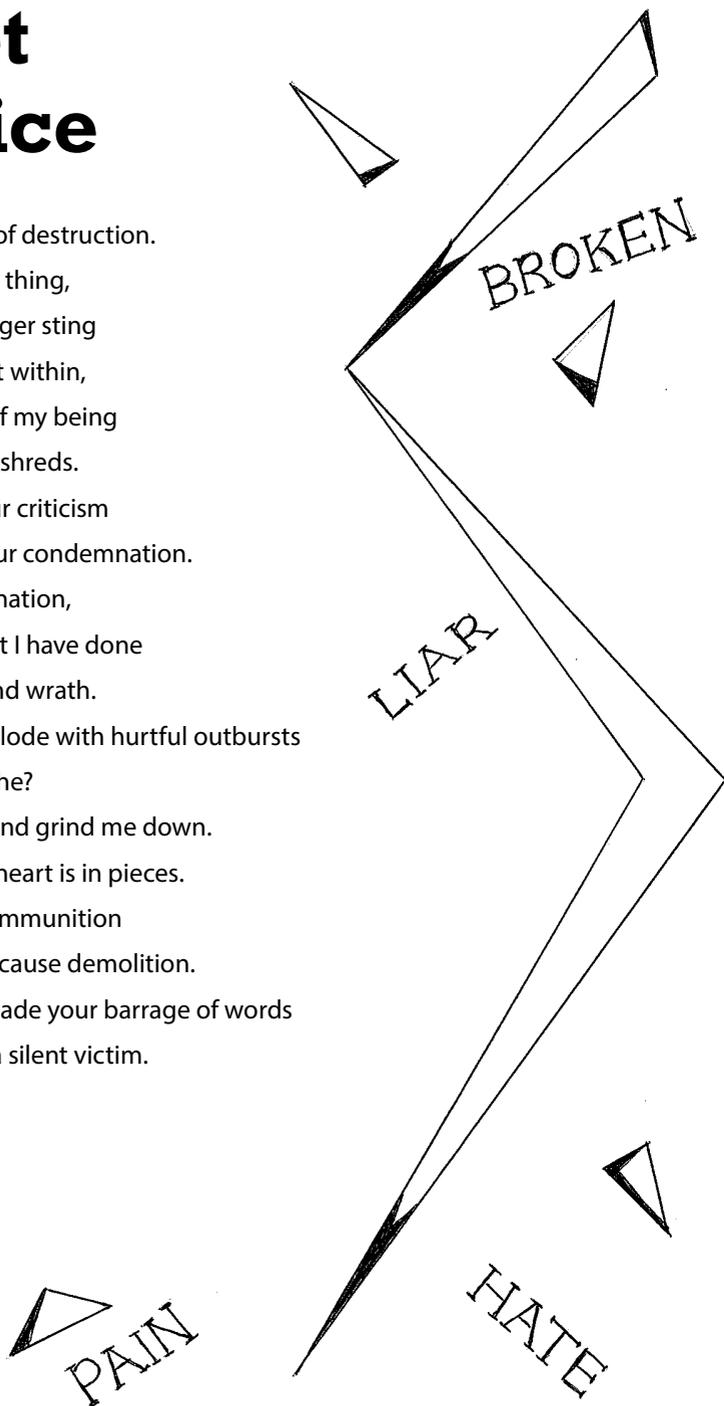
So often that happy couple aren't what they seem,
The true reality hidden and unseen.
By the girlfriend, mum and wife,
Who goes out of her way to portray a perfectly happy life.
Convinced the things he tells her are wrong are, as he says, all her fault,
She feels trapped, too afraid to bolt.
She so wishes he could be,
The person he portrays for others to see.
She does her best to clear from sight,
The things that make him so uptight.
Trying to do all she can to avoid the scenes,
But she'll never win, no matter how much she cooks and cleans.
At any cost he's out for a fight,
It's become the norm every night.
Children should be seen and not heard,
They can upset him with barely a word.
She's so focussed on making things right,
So busy excusing his actions, blindly accepting it's her fault he's uptight.
Only when she's gone is she able to relate,

Sorry
it will never
happen again,
I love you
so much
xxxx

That he's been controlling her since their very first date.
People will say, "Why did she stay?",
When the question SHOULD be, "Why was he that way?"
And adding to her building grief,
Will be the split of disbelief.
Friends she thought would always be there,
Now look to the ground, or simply stare.
He's practiced at deception and convincing in his portrayal,
That he's the victim, a broken, innocent male.
She's making it up and quite insane,
He'll say all he can to clear his name.
On top of the emotions she now has to address,
He's trying all he can to reclaim control over her life. It's such a mess!
Abuse is not confined to fist and bruise,
If he knows emotional control is all he needs to use.
Abuse is when emotional or physical harm is used to scare, control and dominate,
Awareness of the signs needs to be raised so more women can escape
before it's too late.

Target Practice

Words are weapons of destruction.
Words in fun are one thing,
But words fired in anger sting
And wound the spirit within,
Bruising every part of my being
Tearing my love into shreds.
With the force of your criticism
I am the target of your condemnation.
By a process of elimination,
I try to work out what I have done
To cause your fury and wrath.
What makes you explode with hurtful outbursts
Which blast my psyche?
You squeeze, crush and grind me down.
I am shattered – my heart is in pieces.
You have a store of ammunition
Ready to reload and cause demolition.
I need strength to evade your barrage of words
But I am powerless, a silent victim.



The Act

Just for you I stand and think.
Underneath this mask
Silently I daydream – take him to task
For all the hurt and all the pain
Over and over again
Right here, right now, but –
I'm not the one with the power, because
Outside I cover the shame – inside I am
Useless and unable to cope with your frame.
What can I do? Play the game.
Back to reality and I say,
Keep up the act, just for you, another day.

The Secret

She smiles, giving nothing away.
Here we go, another day.
Not a cut nor a bruise to her face or her back,
But his words hit her with such a loud whack.
She shakes and she trembles as she takes the full force,
An emotional punch-bag, it's par for the course.
He says, "sorry," but the word sticks in his throat.
"Let's have a truce," as he moves to her hand,
But the words keep resounding as she looks down at the band
Of gold – and his words filter like sand.
Why does she stay? She asks herself now,
Because what would she do?
How could she survive without mental cruelty?
The does is ongoing, her daily ride,
It's there deep inside her, not showing outside.
Forever, her secret she'll hide.

The Zone

What depths of negativity empower
When doubting thoughts, beliefs devour
Like the predator, frantic for a feast
Demonic reassurance, plies this cunning thief.
False reality then encompassing ensues,
Subjecting victims to its blinded views.
Thus grows the sphere of negativity,
Entrapping innocents by their complicity.
To counter negative with greater more,
Then, serves against intent to greater store.
To treat with kindness and empathetic peal,
Serves but to tolerate and perpetuate as real.
If, by magic senses, find the underlying key,
Then this is how to negate; set free.

Try again

Kindness and caring
Is all that I ask.
No more taking me to task,
Doubting whatever I say,
Never a thought – as it's always your way.
Doubting whatever I say,
Never a thought – as it's always your way.
Each time I fail in whatever I do
Silence and sulking all come from you.
Let's try again
With kindness and caring anew.

What if...

What if ...you don't have trust,
...you hate, not love,
...you're indifferent to his charm,
...your self-esteem is crushed,
...your confidence has crumbled,
...your self-worth is valueless,
...your heart is broken,
...your soul has dissipated,
...all these fears materialise,
...you don't realise

Your emotions are in a downward curve,
And everything touches a raw nerve,
Then your togetherness has been lost
On the sea of despair, it has been tossed
And you have been washed away
In the tide of hopelessness and sorrow
And never again will there be a tomorrow.

Why?

Stinging words that cut like a knife,
She's had to put up with them, most of her life.

Why does he have to cause her such pain?
He twists that knife, again and again.

He lashes out in anger, his aim is surefire.
Bang! In it goes, the consequences so dire.

No blood – but the cost is high,
She hasn't an obvious wound
But below the surface
The ripples spread... from head to toe,
But she's not dead... why doesn't she go?

She cries silent tears, who cares for her fears?
Not him, he's reloading now.
She doesn't stand a chance, here comes the lance.
More ammunition to fuel his rants,
They shout at each other and how!
No thought for tomorrow,
And the hurt goes on.
Why?...

Words

Day and night I live in fear of certain words I hear,
'Me, myself and I.'

Tantrums of a small boy when he can't have a toy?
No – when he doesn't get his own way,
when he's not the centre of attention.
When he sulks and sighs and stomps about,
And of course, he can shout,
'Me, myself and I'

When he's not in control of the situation..
And then there's the tension each day,
Lots of words I could say, but I'm afraid to mention,
For fear of upsetting him again.
'Me, myself and I.'

I suffer the pain day and night.
When I close my eyes tight, I wish I had foresight.
But it's my fate to live with this timebomb
Ticking away day after day.
Life can be okay, when he gets his way,
But I must remember,
'Me, myself and I,'

Come what may.

Postscript

Domestic violence or abuse is defined by the government as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.

This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- Psychological
- Physical
- Sexual
- Financial
- Emotional

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

Although every situation is unique, there are common factors that link the experience of an abusive relationship. Acknowledging these factors is an important step in preventing and stopping the abuse. This list can help you to recognise if you, or someone you know, are in an abusive relationship.

All forms of domestic abuse – psychological, financial, emotional and physical - come from the abuser's desire for power and control over an intimate partner or other family members. Domestic abuse is repetitive and life-threatening, it tends to worsen over time and it destroys the lives of those it touches.

Destructive criticism and verbal abuse: shouting; mocking; accusing; name calling; verbally threatening.

Pressure tactics: sulking; threatening to withhold money, disconnecting the telephone, taking the car away, taking the children away, or reporting you to welfare agencies unless you comply with his demands; threatening or attempting suicide;

withholding or pressuring you to use drugs or other substances; lying to your friends and family about you; telling you that you have no choice in any decisions.

Disrespect: persistently putting you down in front of other people; not listening or responding when you talk; interrupting your telephone calls; taking money from your purse without asking; refusing to help with childcare or housework.

Breaking trust: lying to you; withholding information from you; being jealous; having other relationships; breaking promises and shared agreements.

Isolation: monitoring or blocking your telephone calls; telling you where you can and cannot go; preventing you from seeing friends and relatives; shutting you in the house.

Harassment: following you; checking up on you; not allowing you any privacy (for example, opening your mail), repeatedly checking to see who has telephoned you; embarrassing you in public; accompanying you everywhere you go.

Threats: making angry gestures; using physical size to intimidate; shouting you down; destroying your possessions; breaking things; punching walls; wielding a knife or a gun; threatening to kill or harm you and the children; threatening to kill or harm family pets; threats of suicide.

Sexual violence: using force, threats or intimidation to make you perform sexual acts; having sex with you when you don't want it; forcing you to look at pornographic material; forcing you to have sex with other people; any degrading treatment related to your sexuality or to whether you are lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual.

Physical violence: punching; slapping; hitting; biting; pinching; kicking; pulling hair out; pushing; shoving; burning; strangling.

Denial: saying the abuse doesn't happen; saying you caused the abusive behaviour; being publicly gentle and patient; crying and begging for forgiveness; saying it will never happen again.

If this is happening to you, you are not alone. **One in four women** and **one in seven men** experience domestic abuse and violence in their lifetime.

You are not to blame! Do not suffer in silence, as there are people who can help.

Safety planning

The most dangerous time for a person in an abusive relationship is when they are considering leaving, or have just left. Anyone thinking about this is advised to call one of the support services listed below to talk to someone who can offer help.

A safety plan is vital whether you intend to stay – or to leave:

- Arrange where you might go if you have to leave urgently.
- Find places where you can quickly and safely use the telephone.
- If you have children, teach them how to dial 999 and make up a code word that you can use when you need help.
- Carry a discreet list of telephone numbers for support services and friends.
- Try to save money so that you have bus or taxi fares in an emergency.
- Get an extra set of keys for the house and car and keep these in a safe place, with money and anything else you may need should you have to leave quickly.
- Talk to your children and let them know it is not their fault.
- Talk to trusted friends, relatives, your doctor or nurse about how you feel.
- Consider opening a savings account in your name.
- Always try to take your children with you or make arrangements to leave them somewhere safe if this is not possible.
- Make plans for pets, if you are unable to take them with you.
- Consider visiting the Law Centre or a solicitor to discuss what options are available to you.
- Try to do things which would get you out of the house, such as walking your dog, putting out the rubbish or going to the shops to practice how you would leave.
- Consider leaving a bag with a trusted friend or relative containing the items you would need if you had to leave urgently. Also consider who may lend you money in an emergency.

How can I get help?

If you don't tell anyone about the abuse it is likely to continue and get worse over time. By telling someone, a friend, family member or one of the organisations listed in this, you will be able to start protecting yourself and your children.

There are many different agencies you can call depending on the help you need. If you are in immediate danger you should always call 999.

Further support

Island Women's Refuge and Outreach team

01983 825981 (24 hour helpline)

Police Public Protection

01983 538707

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

07930 932249 (24 hour helpline)

Broken Rainbow (for LGBT victims)

0300 999 5428

Men's Advice Line

0808 801 0327

Isle of Wight Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA)

07930 932249

Hants Direct (for safeguarding children)

0845 650 0097

IW Adults Safeguarding Team

01983 814980

Singing in the Storm

The voice of sufferers and survivors of domestic abuse



END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND ABUSE