

## Background

Joshua is an only child to parents Robert and Dianne. He always knew that his parents loved him, but he felt very conscious that they lived through him. At times he felt smothered and perhaps suffocated by their intense love and scrutiny.

Josh's one passion was cricket! He loved feeling part of the team, and he discovered early on that he was quite a good bowler. He knew this was his key to acceptance by the team so he worked on this every day, out in the backyard, tossing the ball over and over and over. Robert and Diane were delighted that he showed such promise and they were very eager to drive him to all the matches, practice, camps- nearby, over the other side of town, and even interstate.

Josh was generally liked but he had one great mate- Bill. Bill was a great batsman and the team captain. He always looked out for Josh. They had initially lived a few blocks away from each other, and moved up the ranks of the local cricket club together, being sought after as the crucial part of any winning team.

When they were about 12, Bill moved away as he had got a cricket scholarship to a posh school on the other side of town, and his parents bought a house nearby. He was the captain of the school team and did not always have time for the local team any more. Josh invited Bill to his birthday, to the final of the local cricket competition when he was playing, however Bill was often too busy to come. But Josh knew that Bill was his best buddy!!

## Prelude

When they finished school, Josh and Bill both got into university, and both joined the uni cricket team. It felt to Josh like the old gang was back together again. He was so excited! They played cricket together, went to the pub together and went to parties together. There were some times that Bill went off on his own, explaining that he had been invited by friends from school, and it was only for "old boys"!

Josh loved it most when they were out together on the field. He felt that they worked so well together, and basked once again in that warm glow he felt when he thought of how they were both sought out together for the team. He knew that of all the people he had met in the world, he could trust Bill the most. There is nothing that he would not do for Bill!

Bill had a number of girls in tow- he could choose whoever he liked! They flocked around him, and soaked up the natural charisma that oozed from Bill. Josh watched him at parties, and wondered where this magic came from.

Josh met Amanda at university and they became a couple fairly quickly. Mandy was easy to be around, pandered to his whims at times, but would stand up for herself too. Bill admired her easy social style, and her need not to have to impress anyone, even Bill. She seemed happy to revolve, with Josh, around Bill, and go with the flow when this was determined by Bill, and even when contrary to their plans.

Everyone said Mandy and Josh were made for each other, even Bill. Josh was convinced of it, and when they finished their degrees, and were moving into the work force, Josh popped the question, and they married. Bill was the best man, and his current girlfriend the bridesmaid, with Mandy's best friend. They moved into their own place and their life together moved into the family phase. Bill also married and started his career as a professional cricketer.

## Incident

Josh could only see red. He could feel himself seething with rage and wondered whether he would explode. He looked into Mandy's face and could not believe the beginnings of a smile at the corners of her mouth. He picked up the phone and asked her once again- "are you having an affair with Bill?" He pointed to the intimate messages between them on the phone.

Mandy looked down, took a deep breath, and replied in a whisper- yes!

Josh could not control himself! He yelled "How could you?!" and lashed out with a slap to the side of Mandy's face that sent her reeling across the room. She staggered but managed to stand up. He grabbed her by the arm and shoved her against the wall demanding again "How could you do this to me, and the kids? Tell me this is an awful mistake!" It was then that she looked up and he saw it in her eyes- the love she had for someone else- his best friend- the man he had trusted more than anyone else in the world. How could this be happening?

Josh began to lash out. He grasped whatever was in his reach and threw it against the wall. The crystal clock they received as a wedding present from his parents, the photos of the children arranged on the mantelpiece, the vase that he had bought for Mandy at their last wedding anniversary. He could only see red, and was overwhelmed by a crushing sense of betrayal. His breathing was laboured and difficult, and he struggled to take a breath. He closed his eyes and the thought that went through his head was "How am I going to survive this?" He crouched down on the floor and slowly, slowly his breathing improved and he was able to look up and see the landscape of destruction about him. Mandy was nowhere to be seen, and he knew that he had to get out of there.

The next day Josh was at his parent's place when the police knocked on the door and gave him some documents. He was still in a daze, unable to really understand what was happening and what it meant for him. He had never raised his voice or his hand against Mandy or the children in the past. He could not focus on the documents to see what they were and what they meant for him. He saw Mandy and the children listed as "aggrieved family members" and that he was stopped from having anything to do with them. He knew that what he had done was wrong, and that for the time being it was better that he was not around Mandy. He could not look at her without seeing her with Bill! But the kids- he had never been away from them for more than a weekend, and they would need him- he would need them- they were the way for him to get past this! Just like him, they would not understand what was going on and why!

Four weeks later Josh had still not been able to see his kids. Mandy had blocked his number on her phone and he had no way of contacting her to ask about the kids. He had spoken with his GP for a referral to a counsellor, and accepted the invitation by the court to do a Men's Behavioural Change Programme, as the woman on the phone said it was a sure way to persuade a Magistrate that he would not react like this again. He was waiting for an appointment with a family lawyer to discuss options about making arrangements to see the kids on a regular basis. He had taken leave from work to focus on sorting all of this out and being able to move on with his life- whatever that looked like!

#### Comment

Family Violence may be situational- not the reflection of an ongoing pattern of violent behaviour, but the reaction to a situation that provokes and triggers this response. This reaction is inappropriate and unacceptable, and needs to be responded to in a sensitive and nuanced manner based on an appreciation of the type of FV that is involved.