

**FIGHTING
FOR
HER LIFE**

Fighting for Her Life
Copyright © 2014 by David L. Williams

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner, including electronic storage and retrieval systems, except by explicit written permission from the publisher. Brief passages excerpted for review purposes are excepted.

First Edition Printed and Bound in USA
ISBN: 978-1-942428-07-7

Cover Design and Photography by JaneRayPhotography.com
Interior by Kelsey Rice

FIGHTING FOR HER LIFE

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS BEING ABUSED

DETECTIVE DAVID L. WILLIAMS



Pen-L Publishing
Fayetteville, Arkansas
Pen-L.com

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
A Word On Gender And Bias	5
Why Is A “Private Matter” Our Concern?	8
Dangerous Secrets	13
What “Cycle Of Violence” Looks Like	18
Power And Control: When Batterers Use Violence To Get Their Way	25
When Threats Work: The Next Ominous Step In Maintaining Control	28
Myth Of The Rage-A-Holic: Why “Blind Rage” Is No Excuse	46
Why Her Loyalties Shift, And Why She’s So Angry With You	53
When Victims Kill	59
Stalking Is Prevalent—And Preventable	65
Substance Abuse Factors In Intimate Partner Violence	80
Strangulation: The Biggest Red Flag	88
Intimate Partner Rape: The Cruellest Violation	96
Sins Of The Father: How Children Are Affected	103
What Responsibilities Does A Victim Have?	113
Immigrant Victims: Special Fears And Strategies	119
What Does A Professional Police Response Look Like?	127
Strategies For Overcoming Inadequate Or Incompetent Police Work	137
Restraining/Protection Orders: Cure-All Or Snake Oil?	149
Shelters: Havens In The Storm	155
Self Defense: What’s Legal And What Works?	162

Leaving And Living Safely: Planning Her Great Escape	177
Employer Opportunities: Strategies For A Safer, More Effective Workplace ...	185
Men’s Responsibility For Ending Intimate Partner Violence	202
Communities: What You And Your Community Can Do To End The Violence ...	207
Using Our Inside Voice: The Blessing Of Intuition	213
What Friends And Family Can Do To Help	216
On Courage	218
Action Steps	227
Bibliography & Resources	231
About The Author	233

As a law enforcement officer, my fundamental duty is to serve mankind; to safeguard lives and property; to protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation, and the peaceful against violence or disorder; and to respect the Constitutional rights of all men to liberty, equality and justice.

— First paragraph of the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics

INTRODUCTION

Why Does My Friend, Family Member, or Co-Worker Stay With a Violent Man?

“Why would a woman stay with an abusive man?”

You could as easily ask, “Why does a soldier run in panic as the enemy charges?” The response is that human beings don’t always live up to the ideal of the simple question or easy answer. Most of us see ourselves as the hero in any given story, which makes it more difficult to watch a friend or loved one making decisions based in fear and secrecy. The truth is that leaving an abusive partner is hard and dangerous, and tough words from well-meaning family, colleagues, or friends, such as “I’d never let a man put his hands on me,” are little more than bluster if not supported by action and deed. Brave words merely spoken mean next to nothing; courage actually lived is the stuff of legend.

In this book you will read of failures and why, of successes and why. One such success story is about Renee, and her story of courage is as profound and inspiring as those of legendary heroes.

By the time I met Renee she’d endured years of brutality at the hands of a man she’d wed as a teenager, and I suspect she would not be alive today if she hadn’t gotten the help she needed to escape her abuser.

BRAVE WORDS
MERELY SPOKEN
MEAN NEXT TO
NOTHING;
COURAGE
ACTUALLY LIVED
IS THE STUFF
OF **LEGEND.**

**THE THEME
OF THIS BOOK IS
HOPE . . .
AND TAKING
THOSE
FIRST
TERRIFYING
STEPS TO
LIVE LIFE
SAFELY.**

Renee's story was a successful one, due in large part to her courage, the efforts of police officers and prosecutors, and the assistance of victim advocates. But know that Renee's success, and the success of so many others, was also thanks to the support of her parents, her employer, and her friends. Certainly, the services of the professionals helped, but the value of long-term emotional support from loved ones can never be overstated.

The theme of this book is hope . . . and taking those first terrifying steps to live life safely. This is where you come in because taking decisive action to escape enforced bondage has always been best accomplished with help.

Getting involved means placing less emphasis on "Why would she stay with someone who abuses her?" and more energy into the question "What are WE going to do to make sure this never happens again?" The answer involves courage, commitment . . . and you. If you've ever uttered phrases, such as "I'd do anything to help" or "that man better never lay a hand on you," I'm offering a challenge to turn your words into courageous action that will make a difference in a way mere words can never do alone.

I was a twenty-two-year-old rookie the first time I saw domestic violence. He'd thrown her through glass, and she kept mumbling it was her fault. He told us she was crazy, and she referred to him as a "good man when he's sober." I remember wanting to punch him in the mouth and wanting to lecture her about being an idiot. She stayed with him, knowing it would happen again someday, and at that stage of my life I absolutely could not understand.

That was three decades ago, at the start of a career that has now bridged across two cities and has included such adventures as patrol and paramedic work in rough urban districts, helicopter rescue, a walking beat, SWAT, school resource officer, and detective. At some point along the way I was allowed to only take on investigations involving violent crimes, most of which occurred in

people's homes, and those types of cases have been the focus of my professional life for the last several years.

I've learned at least one thing along the way: Anyone can be a victim; it takes something more extraordinary to be a survivor. As that relates to intimate partner violence, the kind of strength needed to leave a man who has already hurt his wife or girlfriend—and who has threatened to do far worse—may be more than your friend, loved one, or co-worker can imagine.

This isn't a book likely to be read by victims of domestic violence—at least not at first. To have a copy in their home would be akin to committing an act of treason punishable by pain or death. They can't keep the information pamphlet handed to them as they left the emergency room last time; they can't carry a cop's business card in their wallet; they can't store the local women's shelter phone number on speed dial. These are things that get them hurt when they're found, and batterers—being the jealous, controlling folks that they are—always find them.

So instead, this is written for the sisters, brothers, daughters, and parents of intimate partner violence victims; the co-workers and supervisors, hair stylists, physicians, fellow PTA members, and dental hygienists who might just spot telltale clues of secret injuries or spirits being crushed; and maybe at some point this book could be for the victims themselves when they finally get to a place in their lives where reading a self-help book isn't a cruel irony anymore.

Consider this a call to arms that we take on this monster as an educated, determined group that won't rest until every man, woman, and child can live in their own home in safety and surrounded by love. The strategy is to form a shield wall to protect them, and then we fill those solid walls with patience and persistence, information and empathy, love and forgiveness. We make sure they have access to any services they might need, including legal advice, transportation assistance, job-hunting skills, safe living

ANYONE CAN
BE A **VICTIM**;
IT TAKES
SOMETHING
EXTRAORDINARY
TO BE A
SURVIVOR.

accommodations, medical and mental healthcare, education, and child support. And certainly, that shield wall includes my brethren, the good men and women serving in law enforcement across the country, who have a sworn duty to protect them from harm.

There was no one simple answer as to why that woman stayed with the “good man” those many years ago. I wonder if things might have been different had she found sanctuary within her own shield wall. There is no going backwards, however. There is only forward and better.

It begins with us. It begins today.

A WORD ON GENDER AND BIAS

*Man is born a barbarian and raises himself
above the beast by culture.*

— BÁLTSAR GRACIÁN

I bear a scar on the inside of my upper lip from a woman. She was tiny—no more than five-two, one hundred pounds with clothes on. She was also angry, as I should have surmised by the fact that she'd just tried to kill her husband by smashing an air conditioner window unit on his head.

The problem, it seemed, was that he refused to engage with her, as a sexual partner, as a business associate, or as her friend. He was her husband, but he'd given up completely on the idea of participating as such in any manner, preferring, I suppose, to simply exist at the same address as her.

This made her purely homicidal one evening, thus the attack with the air conditioner, rendering him a bloody, moaning fellow, still reclined in his favorite chair and much the worse for wear.

Enter young rookie officer Williams, gung-ho, confident in my abilities to assess the situation and bring matters successfully under control. It became clear after a time that she'd done what she did, and there was nothing for it except to make an arrest. The fact that she kept shouting, "I wish I'd killed you," was what we call a "clue" in law enforcement, and as two EMTs worked on keeping the husband's face from falling off, I went to make the arrest.

I AM FULLY
AWARE OF THE
FACT THAT
SOME WOMEN
ARE **VIOLENT**
AND **DANGEROUS**

Mind you, I had participated in some form of martial arts since high school. The hand-to-hand combat training at the police academy had come fairly easy to me because of that background, and I outweighed her by at least eighty pounds.

Pride cometh before a fall, and my fall came when this angry, ignored pixie hit me so hard in the mouth with a telephone that I know—I know!—my eyeballs switched places for a moment.

Mouth blood went everywhere, and her husband feebly pointed at me in a “see, I told you” fashion. She clawed at me like a cougar in a bathtub. The EMTs stared in shock as I finally wrestled her long enough to get her handcuffed, which didn’t stop her from continuing to try to bite, head-butt, and kick my shins all the way out to the car.

Where was my senior partner, you might ask? He was standing back . . . laughing hysterically.

I eventually almost forgave him.

The point is, I am fully aware of the fact that some women are violent and dangerous, and it doesn’t matter if they are tiny and cute. They can kill you, and that is why every allegation of domestic violence must be thoroughly and fairly investigated before blame, arrest, or conviction takes place. That having been said, over ninety percent of all physical attacks in the home involve a male as the predominant aggressor and the female as the victim.

At this point in any lecture I have ever given on the topic, someone raises his hand to point out that the numbers are probably skewed in light of the fact that men don’t report intimate partner violence as often. The reasonable and honest answer to that comment is that women don’t either. Some women don’t report because they don’t want their neighbors to know; some don’t because they are living in the U.S. without documentation, and they’re terrified of deportation; many don’t involve the police because they’ve been threatened with their lives if they do so; others because the man who would go to jail is the

only breadwinner in the family, and the choice of getting beaten up on occasion is an easy one to make over homelessness. There's lots of reasons, all of which we'll discuss, but be clear from the outset that people of both genders, different sexual persuasions, all races and cultures, and at every level of financial income avoid making formal complaints in these matters.

This book, however, is primarily about physical and emotional abuse of men toward women, and I have no apology to offer for that. Now, that's going to make a few folks truly indignant, and I hope they are able to get over it. The realities are that men tend to be more violent and persistent in their attacks than women. Women are six hundred percent more likely to be attacked by an intimate partner, and a current or former intimate male partner is the perpetrator in approximately thirty percent of all female homicide victims. Furthermore, husbands, boyfriends, or former male partners commit nearly thirty percent of all rapes and sexual assaults. So if you want to write a book about the oppression of men by aggressive women, get to typing, but I'm going to stick with this topic.

This book is also not specifically about child abuse, though that particular form of violence is a malignancy in our society. We will, however, focus at points on how domestic violence affects children emotionally, and how it can misshape the rest of their lives. There is convincing evidence that domestic violence, child abuse, generational violence, and sexual predation on children are all interrelated. Thus a logical strategy for preventing child victimization is to take violence among adults in the home as a serious threat to the children living there as well.

That all having been clarified, let's move on to focus on why this is a community problem, as opposed to a "private matter," because once we all agree on that we can start making significant change.

WHY IS A “PRIVATE MATTER” OUR CONCERN?

*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church,
and gave himself for it . . .*

— EPHESIANS 5:25

“There’s a killin’ fixin’ to happen . . . ya’ll best hurry.” The voice of that 911 call was monotone, as if the person talking to our dispatcher was used to such things as killings next door. Two of us were dispatched to the domestic disturbance in a neighborhood populated almost entirely by police-hating white supremacists, and neither of us expected to find a friendly welcome.

“No Name Lane” was the actual name of the street we entered, an unpaved, dead-end road off a business highway at the south end of the city. Rotting shacks lined the narrow lane, and one cannot enter No Name without a sense of time travel and of being watched by members of a predatory, well-armed militia. The shacks were backed by nearly eighty acres of undeveloped forest, and it was rumored that the militia members trained for the ultimate showdown with “the government” in those very woods. Meth and moonshine funded the operation, and the Law was most unwelcome.

We hustled through the mudhole of a front yard, around a damaged trampoline and two rusted lawn mowers, and past a snarling pit bull on a logging chain and a plastic hobbyhorse missing both eyes. All the while we

heard a man screaming profanities at a woman who was begging him to stop on the other side of the front door.

Everything went silent at our rap on that door. The screaming and pleading stopped. No engines passed by on the highway three hundred yards and a world away; even the damned dog shut up. And those watchful eyes were still on us.

“Who is it?” demanded the male voice inside.

“Police Department. Open the door.”

“This is a private matter. Get gone unless you got a warrant.”

There followed a woman’s whimper and a scraping of something heavy being moved to block the door, and it was at about that moment when my boot went through the doorknob.

He was a skinny fellow with bowl-cut bangs in the front and a mane past his shoulder blades, a homemade rebel flag tattooed on his left shoulder.

He threw things in an attempt to keep us at bay: a can of green beans, a shoe, and a handful of cigarette butts from an overflowing Folgers can. And then he went to jail, screaming about suing us for violating his rights and demanding we show him our warrant.

The woman’s bloody nose and bruising cheek and throat would heal. Who knows what would have happened if that world-weary caller had not made the decision to stop the killin’ going on next door?

The same woman reminded us at least four times on the way to the hospital, “I don’t much like cops, but you guys are okay, I guess.”

I can’t tell you the number of times I’ve been ordered from someone’s home after responding to a violent incident with the statement, “This is a private matter,” bandied about like it was an order from the president. “You can’t come in here without a warrant” is another statement made to police officers as they approach the residence, and a lot of batterers try to slam the door in the cops’ faces.

Which begs the question: Was our call on No Name Lane a private matter? It happened behind closed doors within the confines of private property. As a nation we've always jealously protected private domains, so much so that we fought a war to win our independence from a king and his troops who had no misgivings about entering property of private citizens on little more than a whim.

Entering someone's home while acting as a government agent must be done judiciously and with respect toward the occupants and toward the Constitution. Taking this responsibility lightly will get you sued, cause your police department to be as despised as were those redcoats, and maybe even get you hurt (remember how violent those colonists got, after all).

That having been said, there are times in police work when the authority to enter another's residence must be used, even with great force. Certain search warrants and arrest warrants fall into this category, as do emergencies when someone's life could be in danger. The Supreme Court refers to this as "exigent circumstances," stating that if there is an emergency in which lives or freedoms could be in peril, law enforcement officers can enter a home to perform a rescue and initiate an investigation. Further, police and the communities they protect still have an interest in the matter once peace is restored for a number of reasons.

First of all, there is general agreement that just because the violence stopped when the police arrived doesn't mean it won't kick up again when they leave.

Second, it stands to reason that if domestic batterers are willing to be violent toward the love of their life they'll be willing to use violence toward others. Thus a known violent offender is considered a danger to the entire community and not just the people living there with him.

Third, any caring community should be greatly offended by domestic violence. Such crimes insult us all, as a society and as a culture. As such, we as a community become victims of the crime. This is an important distinction,

one that we'll discuss in more detail later when we look at who "presses charges." For now, just understand that intimate partner violence is a crime against the entire community.

Fourth, and perhaps most important, is the fact that domestic violence greatly affects the next generation. Children that witness violence in their homes are significantly more likely to also be victimized in their home as well. They are also exponentially more likely to grow up as batterers or victims of battery because they've grown up believing that this is just the way things normally occur.

For all these reasons, communities have the right and responsibility to send cops into a residence to restore the peace, investigate the crime, and take action to try to prevent it from ever happening again.

Frankly, if we didn't accept this as a shared responsibility we would all be much the worse for it. This is the stuff of souls, and each one of ours is on the line when we choose to ignore the problem. This is a culture that respects Samaritans. We worship in different ways, but we universally aspire to heroism. Being a hero doesn't require a cape, large muscles, or a gun. It calls for courage, persistence, integrity, and enough street savvy to suspect something is wrong when even the victim is trying to hide the problem.

We, as a culture, tend to be caring and righteous. We get thick in the throat and send money when we see people suffering from tsunamis and earthquakes on the other side of the world. We have canned food drives and give our used clothing to shelters. Most of us call the police when we think someone is breaking into our neighbor's house. And, yes, we have it within ourselves to muster the strength to confront a loved one when we think she is being systematically abused and make binding promises that we will stand with her as she weathers her storm.

Allow me to wax romantic for a moment. This ugly dragon called Violence is a problem for our whole village. In our actions

**COMMUNITIES HAVE
THE RIGHT AND
RESPONSIBILITY
TO RESTORE THE
PEACE, INVESTIGATE
THE CRIME, AND
TAKE ACTION TO
TRY TO PREVENT IT**

THIS
UGLY DRAGON
CALLED
VIOLENCE
IS A PROBLEM
FOR OUR
WHOLE VILLAGE.

and oaths, my brother officers and I make a commitment to meet this dragon at the castle walls each and every day, and all we ask is that you stand behind us, point out the dragon when he tries to hide, and support us in this struggle.

Let's talk about how we can do that together. Part of that conversation must include some insight about secrets because that dragon mentioned above just loves for dangerous secrets to be kept. Helping someone who is being abused means understanding that they're not always going to be honest, and that they're not always going to tell you the whole truth. We talk about why that is so in the next chapter.