

Jennifer 2012

Jennifer is a Bsafe recipient. She has had a Bsafe GPS device since late March, two months after a vicious assault by her then partner, Ray. Bsafe has enabled Jennifer to regain some independence, moving more freely in the community, and freed her three children from being constantly vigilant and needing to meet the family's needs outside the home.

## **Background**

Jennifer is an experienced high level sales and marketing executive. Nearly nine years ago she moved back to the north east where she had spent much of her youth, with her three children aged 3, 7 and 9. She retrained in nursing and worked in a regional hospital and also in local schools in administration. Through her youngest daughter's friendship with a schoolmate she met Ray, who had been an acquaintance and was also a sole parent of three children. They began a relationship that was to last six years which was 'genuinely fantastic'. While not sharing a house, both families spent a great deal of time together, including holidays. Ray was loved dearly by Jennifer's three children, particularly the youngest, Emily. He spent time with all the children and was a father figure to them.

Jennifer and Ray planned to live together when the children had all left home; they planned to travel, and looked forward to being grandparents together. Ray had never shown any signs of violence.

In July 2011, after Ray's daughter's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, Jennifer received an abusive text from Ray – the first of its kind. He called her a 'bitch' and ended the relationship refusing any contact with her or her children. Jennifer and the children were 'devastated'.

Six months later, Ray sent her a text. He wrote 'Happy New Year'. They met soon after over coffee, where he told her how much he missed her and loved her. They reunited immediately and things went back to 'normal'. She still loved him very much. The children were thrilled to have him back.

## **The Violence**

On the evening January 12, 2012, Jennifer was having a quiet glass of wine in an uncharacteristically quiet house. All the children were out. When the door crashed open she thought it had been smashed and when Ray came running towards her all she could think was that he looked like Jack Nicholson in *The Shining*. The next 40 minutes would change her life forever. Ray shook, strangled and dragged Jennifer around the room all the time shouting into her face, goading her to react. Whenever he dropped her, he would smash whatever was in sight; at one point sweeping his arm across the kitchen bench sending dishes full of the food Jennifer had been cooking that afternoon flying across the room. He pulled her off the couch and dragged her onto the floor, now filled with shards of broken glass and ceramic. A wall of certificates celebrating the children's achievements were destroyed, stained by the contents of the wine bottle thrown at the wall. Jennifer would sustain injuries that included cut pectoral muscles and cuts to most of her body; a broken collarbone and cracked ribs and lower back damage. At one point he threatened to light the spray from an aerosol can of cooking oil and burn her face. Terrified of being killed, of her

children finding her dead she refused to fight back, believing he would then kill her she begged him to *'please stop'*.

He continued to scream at her stopping only to break something or throw furniture. He cut the telephone cord. Jennifer dialled 000 on her mobile. She pretended to faint, and as he left her to throw a heavy chair into another room, she crawled to the front door and ran across the lawn to the neighbors' house, hysterical.

Ray called Jennifer's oldest child, her son, and said, 'I've fucked everything up'.

The police came to the house. A few days later Ray was arrested, and then bailed. The police applied for an Intervention Order on Jennifer's behalf. Shortly afterwards, Ray took out an IVO against Jennifer, claiming she was throwing rocks on his roof. Despite barely being able to leave the house because of her injuries, she had to go to court for this and says it was 'an act of intimidation'

Since the assault Jennifer has had 65 medical appointments not counting the initial examinations. Her doctor cries whenever she sees her; a girlfriend's husband broke down when telling his mates what had happened to her.

He once told Jennifer of a man he felt had wronged him that he would get him *'he won't know where and won't know when'*. This haunts her.

Jennifer takes medication for the panic attacks that frequently occur. She is on painkillers, sleeping tablets; anti depressants and anti anxiety drugs. On bad days she is teary, she shakes, stutters and avoids eye-contact. She is unable to face people – including what would once have been unthinkable – missing parent teacher meetings.

Jennifer will probably never do frontline work again, if indeed, she is able to work. At present, she is on a pension. She sold her house for much less than expected; a hurried deal to start over somewhere without reminders of the assault.

The worst, according to Jennifer, is the affect on her children. The youngest believes she will be 'murdered in her bed' and it convinced the assault was her fault – she should have been home that evening. All the children are vigilant, watching over their mother and doing any errands that she can no longer face, like going to the shops, attending any sort of function or generally leaving the house. Jennifer lives in terror that Ray will show up and it will all happen again. She is no longer the person who could spend an hour in the supermarket, talking to all the people she knows. Until recently, supermarket staff, like her family and friends, would protect her, blocking off supermarket isles so she could shop in peace, helping her if she faltered, doing her shopping if necessary and often escorting her to her car.

In late March a local family violence worker convinced Jennifer to apply for a Bsafe GPS device. When Jennifer realised it would track her wherever she was, not just in her home, and that help was just a push button away, her confidence began to slowly grow. She takes her Bsafe everywhere. She is able to do her own errands and has even had coffee on her own. The children are freed from their constant vigilance and are moving on with their lives, with study and work.

On September 12 this year, Ray will go to court to face charges of aggravated burglary with a person present; intentionally causing serious injury; recklessly causing serious injury; threatening to cause grievous bodily harm; reckless destruction of property and intentional destruction of property. He is up for seven to 10 years jail. Unlike Jennifer, he has moved freely in the community and continues to work. Jennifer thinks she might be able to give up her Bsafe device after the hearing, but doesn't know for sure. She really would like to be able to attend her son's deb, but that is yet to be seen.

### **The Hearing**

Due to mistakes made by medical staff, evidence detailing the fractured ribs was discounted in court.

Due to the fact that there was a relationship the charge of Aggravated burglary with a person present was discounted as the defendant would have been granted access to the home.

Ray pleaded guilty to the charges threatening to cause grievous bodily harm and causing serious injury. He was sentenced to 12 months in custody for the first charge and 3 months for the second with a non parole period of three months. After being lead from the court he immediately lodged an appeal against the sentence and left the court a free man until November when the appeal will be heard.

Jennifer's family were verbally abused upon leaving the court and the defendant's family have shown intimidating behaviour including driving by her home directly after court. This was reported to police, nothing can be done about it.

Jennifer attempted suicide two days after the hearing.

The reality is that Ray will probably never serve any time in jail.

### **Post script**

Ray has taken out an Intervention Order against Jennifer, claiming she has been stalking his daughter at her school. The dates of her alleged stalking at the school coincide with the summer school holidays, when schools are closed. They are also at the time Jennifer was recovering from her injuries after his attack – she was unable to drive for many weeks.

Jennifer attended Court and was advised by the duty lawyer to sign the Intervention Order. She refused. Her duty lawyer had not read any of her prepared documents that included dates and witnesses that showed there was no evidence to his claim of stalking. She believes they are part of a campaign to intimidate her.

'At the court he breached the IVO by opening the door for me and waving me in so that everyone, including police, could see how nice he is', said Jennifer.

Jennifer is challenging this Intervention Order. She now wishes she had not caved in to the pressure by police and lawyers at the September hearing, who wanted it over that day, and instead appealed, bringing in expert witnesses to verify her injuries. She is determined to fight this time.

'It is lucky I am articulate and confident; someone else, or someone from a non English speaking background, would have no chance.'