



MWIA CASE STUDIES

VIOLENCE CAUSING PERMANENT INJURY OR DISFIGUREMENT

Case 9: Domestic Violence in Italy

Objectives

- To show that women may confuse love with possession and do not realise the danger of their relationship
- To show how it is possible for a woman to recover from a history of violence by finding one's true self, becoming stronger, more courageous, proud of oneself and one's newfound beauty.

Narrative Case

Lucia is a lawyer aged 37 years. One evening in 2013, she returned home after going swimming and was confronted by a hooded man who poured acid on her face. The attacker was a previous partner with whom Lucia had a stormy relationship which she broke off one year previously. He was arrested the same night and subsequently sentenced to 20 years in prison.

He was a professional liar about his 10 year relationship with another woman by whom he had a son. Lucia was complicit in this vicious circle by forgiving his lies and giving him new possibilities. When she chose to put an end to so much exasperation, his behaviour became obsessive: stalking, ambiguous writings, intruding in the house and tampering with the gas system with the risk of blowing up the whole building. Lucia's abandonment of their relationship had triggered in him the spark of resentment.

Lucia survived, but began a dark and painful period marked by the risk of being blind. She underwent a series of plastic surgery operations to repair the damage and restore her facial features. Lucia also embarked on a course of treatment to fight the fragility that made her under the thumb of a violent relationship. She said: "Some stories are born from weakness and lacks what you have inside of you". She becomes a symbol of great strength and courage to all women like her who have been (or are) love sick prisoners.

Learning Points

1. Women may not want to see the danger of their relationship because they are blinded by love. Such women need to work on themselves and accept that if a relationship does not work it must be put aside.
2. Understanding and love of oneself makes a person less vulnerable. The first step is to understand what is happening and how to re-appropriate our lives, bodies and our time.
3. Lucia's situation is a classic case whereby possession is mistaken for love. Anger becomes ferocity, and in turn cruelty which leads to acid being thrown in her face: *"If I cannot have you I will gate you."*

Background information

Prevalence: In Italy, 2013, there were 120 women killed by their partners, but the number of attempted murders is unknown

Psychiatric sequelae: Lucia abandoned her profession as a lawyer, but found the strength to start again and is now more aware, more determined and bolder. She lives with her disfigured face and is an authentic reminder of the phenomenon of violence against women. On March 8, 2014 she was appointed by the Head of State, Knight of the Republic for the courage, determination and dignity with which reacted to the severe physical consequences of the infamous attack suffered

Reference

- Annibaldi, L. & Fasano, G. (2014). *My story not love (La mia storia non amore)*. Rizzoli Editori.