

Domestic Violence Tears

It was raining hard in Monroe-hard enough to make noon look like 8:00 pm from where I sat looking out the window. That's why, when she came in the door to my office, I thought it was rainwater on her cheeks. But no, Madeline had been crying for quite a while, and for good reason. She was a young, single mother trying to put herself through Med School. Yes, I know it sounds made up, but it's God's honest truth. She had a special needs child and an abusive husband. He was a real piece of work, an ex-police officer from Shreveport named Jim.

Old Jim had a history of domestic violence against Madeline, involving instances of strangulation and death threats at gunpoint. The apple must not have fallen far, because while Jim was currently in prison for the abuse charges, his family was threatening Madeline as well.

Listening to her speak, I knew I shouldn't accept the case. I was already swamped, and my caseload was full to bursting. I just knew I would take it anyway. I knew it before she was ever finished talking. I'm a sucker for a sob story.

So, I went to work, drafting and then filing the Petition for Divorce and Custody. We kept Madeline's address and contact information redacted in order to keep her safe. There were numerous service issues because Jim was apparently being moved from prison to prison. All the while, Madeline was in constant fear of Jim's family finding her and of Jim's bonding out. But after eventually tracking down his location and serving him with a hearing date, the rat never even bothered to show his face in court.

My client was granted sole custody that day and was awarded \$1,000 a month in child support. When we stepped outside the courthouse, it was raining again, but this time the smile on Madeline's face made things seem just a little bit brighter.