



SEEKING ASYLUM *in* COSTA RICA

*A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SURVIVOR'S GUIDE TO
PROTECTING YOURSELF & YOUR CHILDREN WHEN
THE SYSTEM FAILS*



SAMPLE

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INTRODUCTION

MY STORY

Not all dreams start off as nightmares. When I met D.T., it felt like everything I had ever longed for was finally falling into place. At the time, I was a full-time solo RVer, traveling across the country and savoring the freedom of the open road. But behind the adventures, I yearned for something more—a sense of stability and the kind of family life I had never truly experienced growing up. I wasn't close to my family, and perhaps that made me even more eager to create a strong, loving home of my own.

D.T. seemed like everything I was searching for. He was handsome, intelligent, spiritual, military background, and had his life in order—rare qualities in the men I had met. He had a well-paying blue-collar job, a house of his own, and, unlike most, he was ready for commitment. We shared a vision of an independent, self-sufficient lifestyle: growing and raising our own food, and embracing the traditional values of hard work and family. On paper, it was perfect. We moved into a relationship quickly, and it was easy to believe this was the life I was meant to have.

Two years later, we got married, even though my reservations had started to grow. There were more and more bad days mixed in with the good than I wanted to admit, but D.T.'s promises always made me hopeful that things would improve. And so, I chose to believe in the future we had imagined together—until the reality of our life became impossible to ignore.



In the final months of my pregnancy, life turned into a nightmare I never expected. I was eight months pregnant when the father of my child, D.T., hammer-fisted me in the face during an argument. Blood poured from my nose and mouth as I was rushed to the hospital. The pain of that night is something I will never forget, but what made it worse was the disbelief and betrayal by the system that followed. Despite the obvious evidence of my injuries, the police chose to believe D.T.'s version of the story. He was not arrested, leaving me to cope with both the physical trauma and the emotional devastation of knowing that the law would not protect me.

TRIGGER WARNING: GRAPHIC IMAGES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

THE FOLLOWING PAGE CONTAINS GRAPHIC IMAGES THAT MAY BE DISTRESSING OR TRIGGERING FOR SOME READERS. THESE IMAGES INCLUDE INJURIES RESULTING FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. PLEASE PROCEED WITH CARE.

IF YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE VIEWING THESE IMAGES, YOU MAY WISH TO SKIP THE FOLLOWING PAGE.



POLICE PHOTOS - DECEMBER 2016

It's difficult to explain the depth of fear and isolation I felt in those moments. The person who was supposed to protect and care for me was the one inflicting harm, and the system I believed would offer protection turned a blind eye. As a Black woman, far from my home state of Connecticut, living in the small, tight-knit town in Wyoming, the odds were stacked against me from the beginning. D.T. was later clinically diagnosed as a narcissist, and was possibly even a sociopath, with a chilling ability to manipulate those around him. I fell right into his trap.

Just a few months after the assault, he set up a situation that would cost me nearly everything. One night, while our newborn daughter, Eloise, was sleeping in our bed, we got into a heated argument. In an attempt to defend myself, I pointed an unloaded gun at him, hoping it would de-escalate the situation. But D.T. was already prepared. He recorded our fight, twisting my act of desperation into something sinister, and called the authorities the next day.

I was arrested and charged with a misdemeanor. D.T. called the Department of Family Services (DFS) and lied, twisting the meaning of my words after our argument and claiming I was suicidal. The authorities took him at his word, and within days, our six-week-old daughter was placed into foster care. It felt as though my heart had been ripped out of my chest. D.T.'s plans to destroy my life with the help of the system were well underway, but the one snag in his plan was that he was also filed as a defendant in our DFS case for getting into a fight with me, which later proved to serve me and our daughter.

I was thrust into an overwhelming legal battle. With no job, no income, and no support system, I found myself fighting on three different legal fronts: a criminal case, a divorce case, and a DFS case. D.T. had filed for divorce and was seeking full custody of Eloise. I remember telling D.T. just two days before our fight that my worst fear was having our child taken away and placed in foster care, knowing the kinds of abuse that often happens to children in the system. At the time, D.T. pretended to sympathize, but he took that fear and weaponized it. What he did wasn't about what was best for our daughter; it was about hurting and controlling me, and the system played right into his hands. Fortunately, with the help of good friends, I quickly found an apartment and landed a good-paying job as a graphic designer.

Despite meeting all of DFS's requirements within just four months and being assessed as a very low risk to my daughter's safety from the outset, Eloise remained in foster care for nearly ten months. Every time I expressed how desperately I wanted my child back during this critical stage in her development, they brushed me off without clear explanations.

It became painfully obvious that the social worker, the guardian ad litem (GAL), and the deputy prosecutor (who are friends with each other) were determined to keep Eloise from me for D.T.'s benefit. D.T.'s house was in a constant state of disrepair due to a list of unfinished renovations, with exposed floors and unfinished walls, nowhere near the standards required by DFS. Yet the system seemed content to stall the reunification process, as if to give him time to "catch up" to better position him to get the full custody he requested in our divorce proceedings.

Another peculiar thing is that the social worker was his neighbor and lived right across the street from him. She had a history of abusing her power with other mothers and getting away with it. She and her colleagues ignored D.T.'s lack of effort to follow their recommendations for services to get our daughter out of foster care, his history of abuse towards me, and his serious psychological diagnoses revealed in the mental health evaluations we were both ordered to undergo. My evaluation came back clean. Interestingly, after D.T.'s evaluation, the psychiatrist not only diagnosed him with Narcissistic Personality Disorder but also referred him to another state-appointed psychiatrist to assess the possibility of pedophilia. I've had my suspicions about this as well.

The GAL's own disturbing background added to my despair; she was married to a convicted sex offender imprisoned for possession of child pornography and remained married to him even though they had young children, yet she held the power to decide my child's future. This was the woman, alongside the social worker and prosecutor, who pushed for D.T. to have unsupervised visitation, dismissing his violent tendencies, and assessed lack of parenting skills. It became evident that their goal wasn't to protect my daughter; it was to punish me. I felt like I was in the Twilight Zone.

Despite everything, I kept fighting. The graphic design job I secured paid \$45,000 a year, a decent salary in Wyoming, allowed me to work from home with a very flexible schedule, so I could take care of Eloise full-time once she was returned to me. I complied with every demand the system placed on me and more: I completed mental health evaluations, attended therapy, participated in Head Start, completed anger management classes, showed up for every DFS meeting and appointment, and even served on a parental advisory board. But none of my progress was ever acknowledged; the goalposts just kept moving. Each time I completed one requirement, they simply added another.

At every hearing, the judge ignored the substantial evidence proving my fitness as a mother, choosing instead to follow the recommendations of the social worker and her work friends, who sat across the courtroom at their own 'mean girls' table, wielding the same social power and intimidation as high school bullies. It became clear that the system wasn't designed to reunite me with my child; it was designed to keep me down.

In the end, the social worker and her cronies recommended that D.T. be granted 50% custody of our daughter. This was a damaging blow, as this recommendation would carry weight in my divorce case. Moreover, they deliberately closed our DFS case before receiving the results of D.T.'s psycho-sexual evaluation by the second psychiatrist, which later revealed troubling findings. His Abel Assessment, which measures the probability of inappropriate sexual behavior and abuse, returned a high-risk probability score of 86%. By the time these results finally came in, our divorce had been finalized. However, I ensured that our divorce decree included a stipulation to renegotiate custody for the safety of our child, pending his evaluation report, which gave me some comfort. That sense of security would be short-lived.

When I tried to use this report to petition the court for full custody, my divorce lawyer advised against it. He warned that even with the damning evidence, I could lose custody entirely if I pursued it and was accused of parental alienation. The corrupt legal system, intertwined with its small-town good old boy (and good old girl) network, was stacked against me. My lawyer, part of that same network, understood all too well how things worked in that county. He knew that bringing in expert witnesses, like the doctors who performed D.T.'s evaluations, could backfire horribly, especially since he was never convicted of any sexual assaults against a minor. The judges and the system had already shown me they weren't interested in the truth or the safety of my child. I felt hopeless.

I had fought so hard and endured so much to finally have Eloise returned from the foster system, only to lose precious time with her that I could never get back. And now, I was forced to hand her over each week to a man who was a monster, with nothing but my prayers to protect her. It was at that point that I realized I needed to explore options outside the system to keep my child safe.

My decision to seek asylum in another country was solidified when Eloise, only three at the time, returned from a visit with D.T., covered in bruises and scratches on her back. I texted him, demanding an explanation, but he ignored me. When I asked Eloise what had happened, she fell silent, too scared to answer. The next day, she admitted that her father had hit her. I took her straight to the emergency room to document her injuries and filed a police report, believing they would finally act. But the police refused to arrest him, saying there wasn't enough evidence.

When I spoke to my lawyer about pursuing full custody over this, he told me the bruises weren't "serious enough" grounds—that Eloise would have to be severely injured and hospitalized, before the courts would consider removing her from her father's custody. This crushed me. I couldn't believe that my daughter's safety and well-being were so casually dismissed by those who were supposed to protect her. I lived in constant fear of her being harmed again or worse. I was doing my best to make a plan to leave the country and save up funds, but it felt like I was playing a cruel game of beat the clock.

A few months later, D.T. crossed another line. Although he was barred from the domestic violence shelter—a small house in the center of town that I rented from the local DV advocacy group—he came to our door, pounding loudly and terrifying us both. When I looked out the window, I saw his gun holstered visibly at his side—a chilling reminder of the lengths he would go to assert control.

I called the police, hoping that this blatant act of intimidation would prompt them to take action. Instead, they issued him only a warning. Staying in the U.S. any longer would only expose Eloise and me to escalating violence without real protection from law enforcement. I truly had no choice but to leave everything behind and seek refuge where I could finally keep my daughter safe and start rebuilding our lives in peace.

Every day, I am grateful for the strength and guidance that brought me here, and for the chance to live our lives without fear. Costa Rica has become a place of healing, where my daughter and I can finally breathe, laugh, and grow. The road that led us here was painful and unjust, but it forged an unbreakable resilience within me.


I now see that my survival wasn't just for us; it was a call to help others escape the chains of corrupt systems that seek to silence and oppress. My story isn't just about finding safety; it's about reclaiming our right to live in peace and pursue happiness, free from the shadows of our past.

And while my journey may seem extreme, you don't need a story like mine to seek a new beginning. Asylum offers a path to safety for anyone facing persecution, oppression, or serious harm, and Costa Rica provides a genuine opportunity for refuge and a life reclaimed. In sharing this journey, I hope to inspire others to find their courage, to break free, and to create new lives filled with hope.

This is the chapter where I detail my journey, the struggles I faced, and why I sought asylum in Costa Rica. It is a personal account that gives you an inside look at the realities of escaping an unjust system...

WANT TO LEARN THE EXACT STEPS I TOOK?

Get the full book, *Seeking Asylum in Costa Rica: A Domestic Violence Survivor's Guide to Protecting Yourself & Your Children When the System Fails*, and gain a step-by-step guide to navigating the asylum process, avoiding legal pitfalls, and successfully relocating.

 Purchase the full book here: <https://bit.ly/41iUFtK>

Need Personalized Guidance?

If you're considering seeking asylum but don't know where to start, I offer 1-hour private consultations where we go beyond the book and address your unique situation.

◆ Schedule your consultation now: <https://bit.ly/3WUZeHJ>

Your future starts now—take the next step toward safety and freedom. 