



*2 PARTS
OF DESIRE*

Ruth

"You're ugly. You're good for nothing. You're lucky I married you." In most cases, the women only seek help after years of suffering either physical or emotional abuse. In our social work interventions at APPOGG we've noticed that in many cases the turning point, that moment when victims decide to take action, is often either when the violence targets the children or when the men start having sexual affairs with other women. "This is it, he will never come back to me."

It's a power issue. "Your cooking sucks. The house is filthy. You're so fat. *M'int tajba għal xejn.*" Some men like to have total control over women. They make sure their wives or girlfriends are completely isolated from their friends & family, they refuse to give them any money, they insist on knowing where they go & whom they talk to. Some husbands also manage to turn the kids against the mother & they participate in the beatings & insults. *Biex mara tasal titlaq mingħajr it-tfal, tħalli t-tfal warajha, verament tghid "ma fadalli xejn iżjed hawn jien."* *Mara mkissra.* With this constant battering of the woman's self-esteem this ends up cracking & eventually shattering, to the point that the victims believe they are ugly, useless, fat, bad wives. "*Qed jgħidli hekk għax iħobbni. It-tort tiegħi.*" Ultimately, life becomes hell.

Yes, we've seen very severe cases of physical violence...behind closed doors there are no limits. Use of objects for beatings, marital rape, murders. *Is-social workers ġieli jitqallgħu bl-affarjiet li jaraw.* "*Ma mmurx għand ommi għax jagħmel stragi hemmhekk ukoll.*"

"I won't do it again. I promise I've changed." As victims, women tend to be far more vulnerable when they are socially & economically dependant on their husbands, particularly if this is due to the woman's low education levels. "*Telqet u għabtni f'iilsien in-nies! Ara x'għamlitli!*" Where the man is the breadwinner, the woman is often incapable of leaving home. "How will I take care of the kids? How will I pay my lawyer? Where will I live? How will I pay the bills?"

For us as social workers, building the survivor's self-esteem is her recovery's building block. "*Mhux it-tort tiegħek. Inti minitx waħdek.* You're capable of getting & keeping a job." A domestic violence survivor just desires a better life. As a victim it means sticking around hoping things would improve. As a survivor it means saying "stop, it's time to live my life."

"*Jekk int it-tifla int is-seftura. Jekk it-tifel, ir-re.*" At APPOGG we want to challenge the attitude, the culture, the belief. It's all about equality; there is no weaker sex.