

*What type of
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Dear Diary,

It was after the 'altercation' that Fortie's marriage of fifteen years came tumbling down like her grandmother's old rickety-crickety, wooden house in *St. Joseph Village*.

And so did her entire world. If Mortimer had not let his anger get the better of him, her mother would not have been sprawled out on the floor of the children's bedroom nursing a huge 'pappywess' on her forehead. Half-inch again and she could have easily cracked open her skull at the edge of the girls' metal-frame double-decker bed, when she fell back, and would have been as dead as a doornail.

If only Mortimer had not let his anger turn into violence...if only he had set his pride aside for one second and fulfilled his promises to go for counselling.

But it was too late.

Fortie finally filed for a divorce from her husband. It came directly after another violent episode where to her utter dismay and shock, her husband, Mortimer, became violent towards her ailing mother who had recently moved in with the family. To her, that was the last straw. It was bad enough for him to hit Fortie; bad enough for him to hurl obscenities at her in front of the children or to be unfaithful to her with his many women, but to hit an old woman in such a manner was like the unpardonable sin to Fortie. What type of monster could commit such an act?

She couldn't help but wonder if Mortimer had gone for counselling, whether the two of them would still have been married today. But that and SpongeBob's middle name she'll never know.

Diary...

It all took Fortie by surprise... she was in shock. The twins were in shock too. Thank God Xavier did not witness all of this. He already hated his father for being so mean-spirited to his mother. God alone knows how he would have handled this situation. Luckily, he had spent the night at the home of his Aunty Pennie and Uncle Jasper, both Math teachers. They were helping him with some last minute revision for the CXC Mathematics exam he had to sit that week.

“Daddy how yuh could hit Grann? Look what yuh do Grann!! How yuh cud do that to Grann?”
Khloe and MacKenzie screamed in disbelief, as they rushed over to help their grandmother, who lay motionless on the floor.

Mortimer didn't care about all that talk from his daughters. His eyes were red and fierce like a raging fire. He just stormed past Fortie in a huff, towards his **Honda CRV** parked in the driveway, and like a bull in a China shop, left a destructive trail behind him. All attention was on Bernice who was too dazed to move. A huge *“pappywess”* had formed on her forehead and it was only then that Fortie realized that Mortimer had head-butted *Grann* with full frontal impact, like Ray Appollan or Hulk Hogan in a wrestling ring. That was his modus operandi.

At that moment, Fortie's thoughts took her on a journey back into time. She remembered the stars. Yes, the stars. That was the night she saw them, when Mortimer viciously head-butted her and sent her staggering against the kitchen sink. Those were some real stars. As she wrestled with the darkness of unconsciousness, the 'pappywess' that formed, quickly grew into a giant-size monstrosity on her forehead, throbbing with a heartbeat of its own. Those were the days when she had to give herself frequent make-overs (a new hairdo, complete with a 'donkey-mane') to conceal the criminal evidence and protect the offender.

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Bernice was in excruciating pain and could barely get her bearings. Eventually they got her moving and she stood up balancing on Fortie's trembling arm. Fortie set her gently to rest on Khloe's lower bunk.

Fortie then rushed to the kitchen to get some ice blocks from the deep freeze. She wrapped them in a wet washrag, ran back upstairs and placed the rag on her mother's forehead.

"Dat nastiness!" she muttered angrily under her breath! *"Ah cyah believe he would do something like this! Not to an old lady so! Naah! This is de last straw!!"*

Everything thereafter happened in a blur. Fortie was in automatic pilot mode. Hurriedly getting the girls dressed for school. Jumping into her silver *Mazda 323* and dropping off the girls in San Fernando. Visiting the police station and making the report. Then off to the photo studio to document the evidence, in detail. She had watched enough LMN episodes on TV, to know the drill. Everything was done on auto pilot, with Bernice by her side.

The Justice of the Peace prepared the restraining order - the magnet of all magnets for the death of many women at the hands of their 'restrained' spouses. Then off she went to find a place to rest their heads for the night. Fortie's grandfather's house on *Cooper Street* was that refuge. She had packed up sufficient clothes to last them a few days.

In no way was she going back to the house just yet. Her home was no longer a safe haven for her. She no longer could live with the *animal* who this time, had gone too far. She worried about how to break the news to Xavier. This could be so devastating and traumatic for a teenager....and he was so close to CXC exams. *The timing was bad!*

Diary... As the days went by, a police officer served Mortimer the restraining order at his jobsite. He left the house the following day with most of his belongings and without any drama. By that

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time he had simmered down, probably now realizing the gravity of the situation; not to mention the assault charges he could be facing. Fortie's only consolation was the fact, he was gone. It was the only time that she and the children felt safe to re-enter their home.

Although locks were hastily changed, emotions remained on high alert. The slightest sound rattled Bernice's nerves. The smell of the few pieces of his clothes that still hung in his closet sent Fortie into mild panic attacks. However, this soon settled down after a few weeks, but not before she sought Debriefing (Critical Incident Stress Debriefing) sessions for she, Bernice and the children; particularly the twins, having witnessed the family violence. Xavier claimed he was fine...happy that his father was gone. His sentiments however did not excuse him from attending counselling sessions with a child psychologist. As a matter of fact, his sentiments indeed proved that he needed counselling.

Before long, Fortie would blink and her divorce attorney would be presenting her case to the Senior Magistrate. It was the quickest divorce settlement ever in history. Well, it sure seemed that way to Fortie. She had all her evidence in order. She got the house and full custody of the children. She desired no alimony; her attorney insisted on maintenance for his children. Mortimer and his attorney presented no formidable resistance.

In retrospect, it was the best decision she had ever made. She felt free from the neglect, the hurt, the abuse and the fact that her children would no longer have to endure living in an emotionally unstable environment. The threat of domestic violence and substance abuse did not loom as large over the children, as their father who was also a chronic marijuana user, was no longer in the home. There can now be some semblance of peace; some hope for a brighter future for her three children, and at least the absence of that disgusting and ever-foreboding scent of cannabis. Fortie clearly remembered the obnoxious smell as if it were etched into her memory by some giant-sized 'spliff.'

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However, immediately after the hearing at the Magistrate's Court in San Fernando, Fortie walked down Penitence Street to her parked vehicle. As she sat behind the wheel, shut the door and fought back the tears, Fortie couldn't come to terms with the mixed emotions that were now consuming her. She thought that she'd be ecstatic, at least relieved about the divorce. Instead she was on the brink of tears. She wished she had a sister to call and share her anguish with, but Bernice ensured that was not to be.

Diary...

"Why would anyone ever bring only one child into this wretched world?" She asked herself. *"Why would anyone allow a child to go through life in solitude and without sibling support?"* The loving support only blood brothers or sisters could appreciate. Fortie never knew what that felt like. She was alone in this world. She thought she had grown used to it...it was all she knew. This time she felt the 'aloneness' closing in on her more than ever. Who would be there for her, now that her husband was a historic blur of her past? How she wished she had a brother. She always felt that if she had a big brother to stand up in her defense against Mortimer, he never would have raised his fist to hurt her.

She tried stuffing her thoughts into the proverbial jar, but it kept spilling over the edges, running down the sides, messing up everything in its pathway, as it trickled down memory lane...

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