

This poem was written 2 years ago after over four decades of an abusive marriage.

Now in her 60's the author has recently found the strength to leave her husband and thanks to the support of her many close friends is living on her own, seeking a divorce and finally taking charge of her own destiny. She hopes the poem will resonate with others in similar situations.

The Monster

A monster dwells within this house
With more faces than a clock
Sometimes he seems quite gentle
More often hard as rock
My life is lived on eggshells
Like a bed of shattered dreams
From the outside things look rosy
But it's not all as it seems

I wonder why I stay here
But there's no where I can go
To escape his cruel coercion
My self esteem's too low
I know he doesn't hit me
But abuse takes many forms
Too many years of name calling
Like bitch and slag and whore

At the start he could be charming
Attentive, kind and fun
But far too late I realised
That a monster lurked within
I'm sure I would have run for miles
If only I had known
That my life would always be controlled
By a man whose heart was stone

I'm trapped within a spiders web
Too tangled, too complex
I know he'll try to bring me down
So I try hard not to vex
And sometimes we can go for days
And sometimes even weeks
Before the mask slips once again
And I'm scared to even speak

To people on the outside
I might appear quite strong
Successful, brave, articulate
I act like nothing's wrong
My friends who think they know me
And think they understand
Don't realise how hard it is
To be here with this man

I'm ashamed that I have given him
This power over me
His resentment and his bitterness
So clear for me to see
He's damaged many friendships
As he tries to isolate
But I've kept some independence
Which makes him more irate

I don't want to be a victim
And in many ways I'm not
I've raised two special children
And achieved an awful lot
And at times we have been happy
When the monster hides away
But I can never quite relax
For it never stays that way

There's not always a trigger
Or a pattern or a cause
It might be just the way I look
Or an innocent faux pas
It's always unpredictable
And I'm never quite sure why
I seem to make him furious
And he tries to make me cry

My work, my friends, my family
My weight, my hair, my clothes
My cooking, cleaning, housework
My opinions, my nose
All subjects for derision
The list goes on and on
Like an endless tide of painful barbs
I long to be alone

He's had most of my money
He hasn't worked for years
He hates the fact that I've done well
And had a good career
He's dined out on my achievements
And spent beyond our means
On cars and boats and holidays
It must be in his genes

He loves to be the big I am
And his friends they think he's great
For he's always there to lend a hand
While I am left to wait
And if I ever dare to ask
For a favour or some aid
He'll scowl and sulk and sigh and swear

And I am left afraid

He'll say I've got a lovely house
How lucky I must be
To have married someone just like him
Much cleverer than me
He's put me first in every way
And everything he's done
Is to show the world he loves me
And that I'm his number one

He says he loves his children too
And his grand kids are the best
And some days he seems quite affable
When the monster's been suppressed
And then things seem quite normal
And we all feel quite relaxed
But then the cycle starts again
And it cuts like broken glass

The children love their father
And I've tried to put them first
I try my best to shield them
But they've seen him at his worst
And yet they try to please him
And still come back for more
They hope that they can change him
Though his actions they abhor

It's sad he has no insight
He gaslights all the time
And all his woes are all my fault
Without me, he'd be fine
So I say, ok let's separate
For I can't take anymore
But he tells me he will kill himself
If I walk out the door

So I'm stuck in this relationship
This toxic melting pot
I try to make the best of things
As this is all I've got
The children say just leave him Mum
We'll support you all the way
But I know he'll end up hurting them
So I stay another day