



The Little Prisoner

By Jane Elliott
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Introduction

The Little Prisoner traces the life of a girl who was dominated, bullied, and sexually abused by her stepfather, a man just fourteen years her senior. She was held prisoner in an emotional and physical nightmare for seventeen years . . . until she fought back.

At the age of twenty-one, Jane managed to escape him to be with the man she loved and her two daughters, but it took another five years of living in hiding before she found the courage to go to the police.

Nearly every witness who could have attested to the psychopath's evil and violent habits was too frightened to come forward, so the outcome of the case rested solely on whether the judge and jury would believe Jane and her small band of brave supporters.

Questions for Discussion

1. Based on his interactions with his wife, his children and stepchildren, and his neighbors, how would you characterize Richard's personality?
2. Why do you think social services never successfully managed to intervene in Jane's case?
3. Why does Richard's abuse of Jane serve to further alienate her from friends and loved ones? How is she able to keep up the illusion of a happy personality at school?
4. To what extent does Richard's encouragement of Jane's smoking, drinking, and having premarital sex reflect his own agenda when it comes to her welfare?
5. How complicit is Jane's mother in her daughter's abuse? Why do you think she didn't intervene if she in fact suspected her husband's abuse?
6. What does Steve's reaction to Jane's story reveal about his misgivings about Richard and his devotion to Jane?
7. Given the many incidences of physical and sexual abuse recounted in *The Little Prisoner*, why do you think the judge recommended to Jane's attorney that her stepfather be tried for his controlling behavior, rather than his abuse?
8. To what extent do you think that Jane's stepfather's sentence of fifteen years in prison was too lenient for the crimes he inflicted on Jane?
9. Jane's relatives are surprised to learn that she couldn't stop Richard from his abuse of her as an adult. Why do you think this is the case, and to what extent do you concur?
10. What does Jane's beating following Richard's imprisonment suggest about the culture of violence that pervades her extended family?

About the Author

Jane Elliott is a pseudonym. She first decided to tell her story to the police after taking inspiration from Dave Pelzer's powerful memoir *A Child Called It*. She became convinced she should not remain a silent victim but act against the stepfather who had kept her a virtual prisoner for so many years.