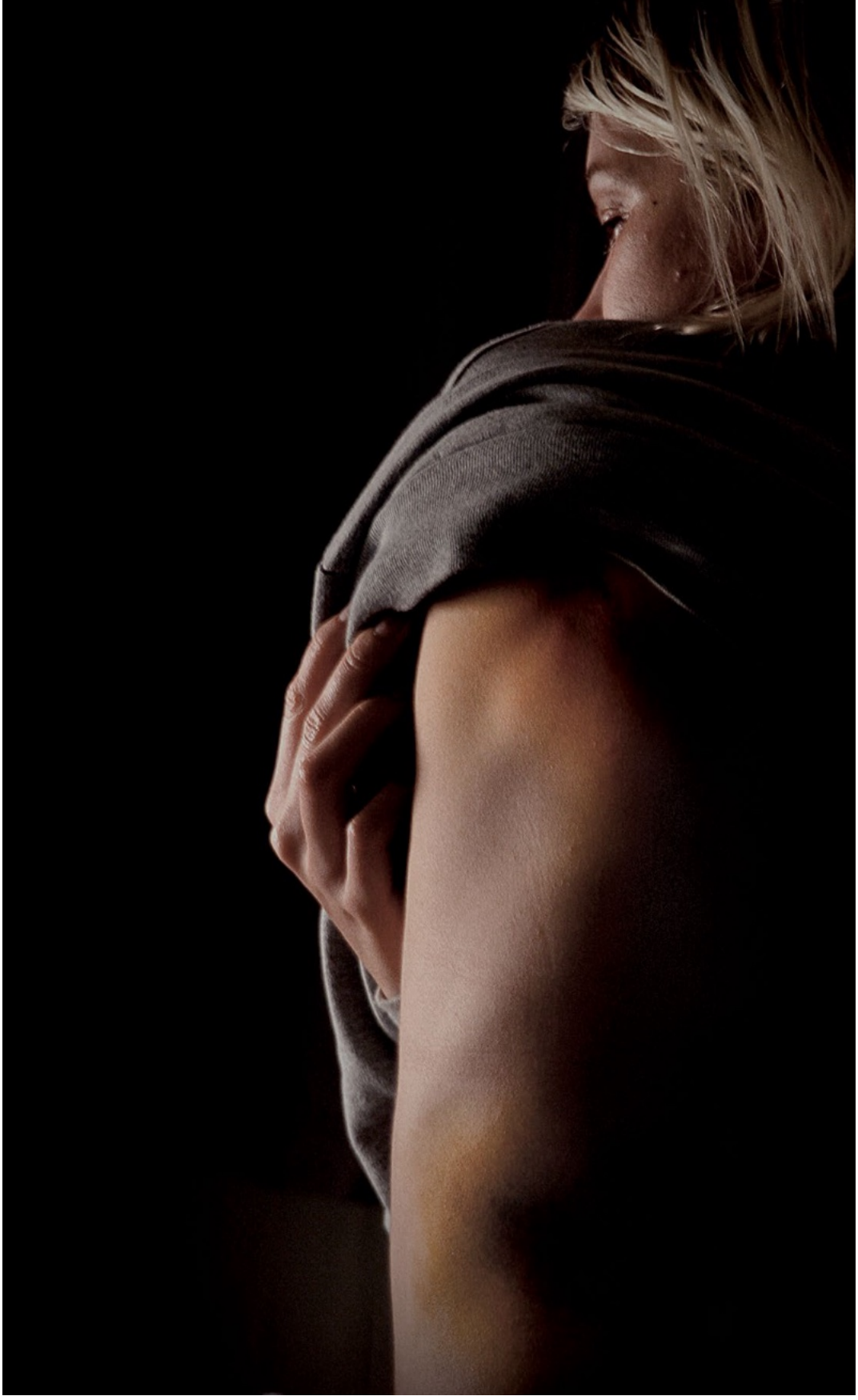


LEAVING

ILLUSTRATED SCRIPT & COMMENTARY

Useful insights and learning points for use in domestic abuse training

SOCIAL FILM DRAMA

MOVE, INSPIRE & CHANGE

LEAVING

An illustrated script and commentary providing useful insights and learning points for use in domestic abuse training.

INTRODUCTION

Leaving is a film which has been produced in a genre described as Social Film Drama. The nature of film is such that it can draw the viewer into the story and lives of the character. It makes you feel how the character feels. It gives you the next best thing to first hand personal experience of a situation.

In short, Social Film Drama gets under your skin, it pricks your conscience, it stays with you. After watching *Leaving* a common reaction of audiences is to want to talk about it, to share their emotions with others and, we hope, to consider what action can be taken to promote better understanding of domestic abuse and provide better support to victims.

Watching *Leaving* often leaves people emotionally drained and only by seeing it again are they able to take on fully the issues which the film conveys. In a training environment it is often necessary to examine the words and actions in some detail. Doing so provides the basis for workshops focussing on particular aspects of the film.

By reproducing the script of the film in full along side stills (every 20 seconds) we hope will give the trainer an opportunity to use individual scenes or specific conversations in a way which will focus attention and allow discussion to develop in relation to key issues (e.g. interview with employer).

We have also included a commentary based on our own interpretation of events. This is neither definitive nor comprehensive. Throughout the film there are opportunities to link scenes to other research or information. It is our intention to build on the commentary using feedback from trainers. So, please let us have your thoughts and feedback on how we can further develop this resource in a way which exploits the potential of *Leaving*.

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Jim sits on the sofa breathing heavily.



This doesn't look like someone who has just assaulted someone else. But it is not uncommon. The calm after the storm. Jim has had his physical and emotional release and is now planning what to do next.

JIM: *Helen. Hel'. Helen. C'mon, up you get. C'mon up please." "C'mon I'm trying to help you. C'mon up you get. C'mon.*
There you go. Wasn't too hard was it? Mmm? Show me. Show me.



Jim is belittling what has just happened.
Acting like a parent seeing to a hurt child, he is distancing himself from his responsibility for what has just happened.
By pretending to be concerned he is playing mind games with Helen.

JIM: *If you didn't give me reason to do these things they wouldn't happen would they? Mmm?*
Would they? No?
HELEN: No. No.



Jim is psychologically wearing down Helen – working on her to make her accept that the violence is the direct result of her actions and not his own responsibility.

JIM: *You Okay? Are you Okay?*
HELEN: *Yeah.*
JIM: *Alright good.*



Jim's insistence forces Helen to accept that she is okay and nothing that bad has happened. He won't leave off until that point has been established.

HELEN: *I'm Okay.*



There is a note of confrontation in Helen's voice: challenging Jim for a moment about the crazy reality he has created that suggests she could be okay with being beaten and left bruised and bleeding on the floor.

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JIM: *Right listen. I'm going out. Is that okay with you if I go out for a bit?*
HELEN: *Yeah.*



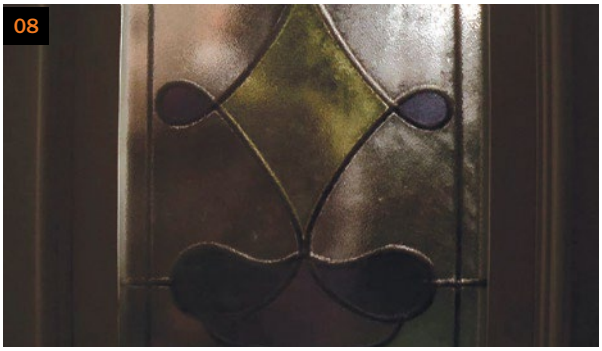
Asking permission to go out. This is real mind games and manipulation: trying to make Helen believe she is in control and all this violence was just a dream, from another reality.
It is subtly mocking Helen and paradoxically just emphasises to Helen how powerless she is. It leaves her feeling humiliated.

JIM: *Right. Well I won't be long. Okay. Clean yourself up, alright. Clean all this up as well.*



The killer comment. This implies all the mess (and therefore the violence) is now confirmed as Helen's fault and responsibility.

Jim leaves the house, locking the door behind him.



And finally, the door is locked.
This is the reality behind all the mind games. Helen cannot leave. She is a prisoner in her own home...

Helen goes upstairs to the bathroom.
HELEN: *Liam. Liam. Liam.*



Helen feels the pain intensify and calls out to her son. She is thinking about what she can do to get out of her desperate situation.

Liam is sitting in his bedroom playing computer games.



Liam will have heard the start of the argument and the violence.
His escape is to stay in his room with his headphones on loud.

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LIAM: *Mum what?*



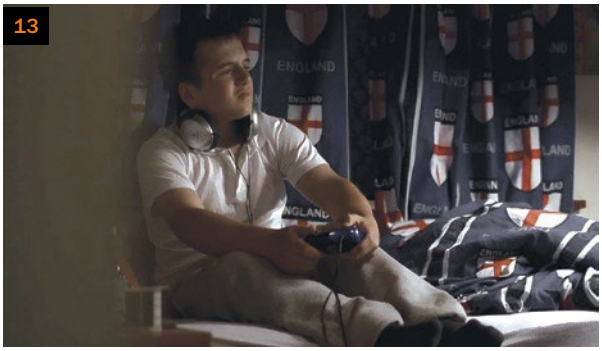
Liam does not want to get drawn into the situation. And who can blame him.

HELEN: *Can you just pack your bags, we've got to go now yeah. We're leaving alright? Liam. Please just...*



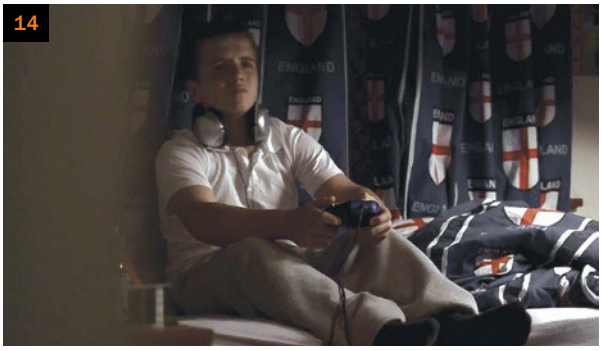
Fear is growing for Liam. He is going to have to take sides.

LIAM: *Mum I can't hear you.*
HELEN: *Liam, can you just do as I say please.*



Helen, on top of the pain, has to summon the energy to try and convince Liam to do something he doesn't want.

LIAM: *Where's dad?*
HELEN: *I don't know where he is.*
LIAM: *Well I'm staying. I ain't going. I'm waiting for dad, mum!*



Liam thinks his safest way out of his 'stuck in the middle' situation is to only agree if there is a consensus between mum and dad. He is also probably waying up the risk of him also becoming a victim of his father's anger and violence.

HELEN: *Liam, please just...*
LIAM: *Mum, I ain't going!*



Helen resorts to pleading. She no longer has the energy to insist.

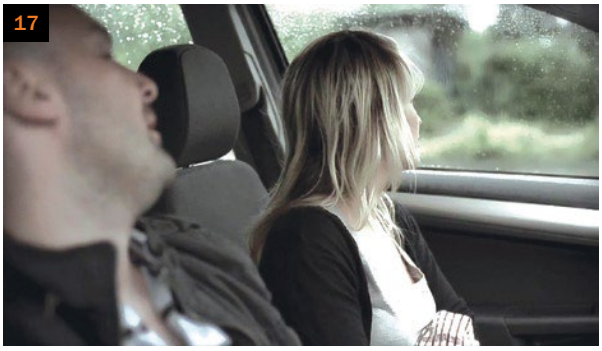
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HELEN: *Liam please.*
LIAM: *Mum, shut up. I ain't going and that's it!*
HELEN: *Liam. Liam. Please. Liam.*



Liam's mixture of fear and anger about being brought into the firing line boil over. His anger partly reflects the patterns of behaviour he has observed and absorbed in this house but are by no means inevitable.

Cut to scene in the car with Jim and Helen.
JIM: *I'm so, so sorry. I know you don't believe me. I know. I genuinely am Helen. I am so sorry.*



Jim has got himself into a potentially dangerous situation. He has caused a visible injury and Helen briefly has the upper hand in the relationship. It is time for him to do some back peddling.

Helen takes a deep breath out.
JIM: *I can change. I know I can change. I know I can change I... So long as you help me.*
HELEN: *You're pathetic.*



The cycle of violence followed by remorse is common. But whether the remorse is genuine is unclear.
Over time the need to reassert power and control tends to return.
For now, Jim needs to get Helen to believe in his sincerity to get him out of his current difficulty.

JIM: *Please Helen, help me through this. Please help me get through it.*
HELEN: *How many times have I heard this?*
JIM: *I know*
HELEN: *Yeah how many times?*
Jim sighs.



Helen has to way up whether Jim is genuine. Her experience tells her he is not or at least it is not going to last. But emotionally she has a bigger challenge. She used to love Jim and in some ways still does. And isn't love meant to 'endure all things.'

HELEN: *How many times have I said I'm going to help you?*
JIM: *I know. I know. I keep thinking of Liam.*
HELEN: *Oh god.*
JIM: *Please don't take my son away from me Helen. Please. Helen please. I love you so much.*



Jim appeals to Helen's sense of family and her love for Liam.
And Helen would so much like to have a real family and her son grow up with a dad.

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HELEN: *Oh yeah right.*
JIM: *I love you so much. Jim sighs and dries his eyes.*



With a remorseful Jim begging for forgiveness, Helen seemingly has the upper hand. Although given the potential consequences of revealing her abuse, she is still unsure and fearful as to whether now is the time to disclose.

Cut to scene in hospital with Jim, Helen and Claire the nurse.



At the ward, Jim keeps a close eye over Helen, nervous as to whether she'll reveal the truth behind her injury. His overseeing 'caring' presence ensures she doesn't.

NURSE: *Okay, let's take a quick look. Lift that up for me. What happened?*
HELEN: *Err. Just the frying, you know the err, the chip oil it just splashed on it.*
JIM: *Will it leave a scar?*



Going through the motions of enquiring how the injury happened, the nurse is unaware of any signs of abuse. Helen wants to reveal all, but also knowing that to do so could put her at further risk, she decides to lie. Jim in turn appears genuinely concerned. This public image contrasts with what we know of him when at home.

NURSE: *Well that is difficult to say but obviously we'll do our best to minimise any kind of scarring.*
HELEN: *I don't know, you know, I do this every night I'm always...*
NURSE: *Don't worry, you're not the first.*



Helen nervously continues to add to her story, the nurse's auto-mated response, which cuts Helen short is potentially systematic of an overworked staff member who sees her patient as a number on a busy night, rather than a victim displaying the subtleties of an abusive relationship.

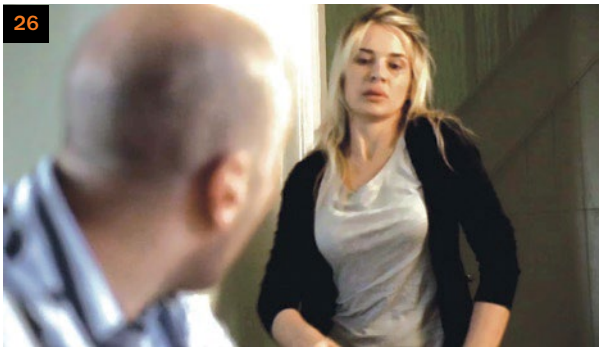
Cut to scene at home with Jim and Helen in the kitchen.
JIM: *I go to work all day I come home to this shit!*
HELEN: *What shit?*
JIM: *This! I can't eat it! What is it?*
HELEN: *Well. You know what it is.*



Here we see the abuser use a situation to provoke conflict and release anger. This emotional and psychological abuse crushing the self-esteem of Helen to make her easier to control.

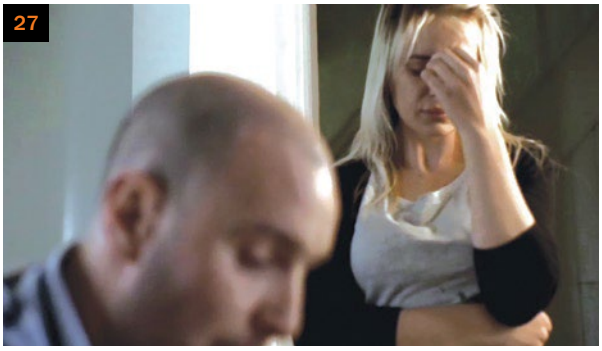
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Helen moves to take the food away.



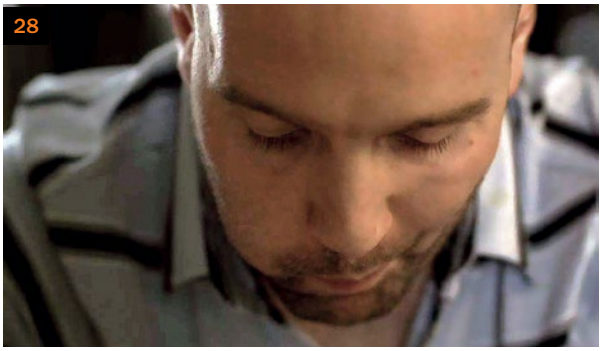
Dissatisfaction with his evening meal presents Jim with the perfect opportunity to make an example of Helen and install further fear.
He deliberately causes an argument with an anxious Helen who in turn begins to pacify him, investing herself in keeping Jim content.

JIM: *No! No! You're right. You've gone to all the trouble. I should be more grateful shouldn't I eh?*
HELEN: *I'm sorry. I'll just. Why don't I just do something else?*
Jim I'm sorry I...



Recognising that he has complete control over the situation, Jim plays out the ordeal for longer by playing mind games with Helen, increasingly exploiting her fear and anxiety of a further attack.

JIM: *Mmm, lovely.*
HELEN: *Jim we'll just get a take away or something yeah? You know you're right you've had a hard day...*



With the pressure building, Helen becomes more and more submissive in her attempt to pacify Jim.

JIM: *There I'm done. Now you can take it. Go on.*
HELEN: *I don't want to.*
JIM: *You don't want what? I'm finished. Now take the plate.*



Though by now given her experience of Jim's behaviour, Helen knows a physical attack is inevitable. Victims of abuse sometimes speak of the lead up to an attack being worse than the act of violence itself, as at least a physical strike signals the end of the abusive situation, though only for a short while.

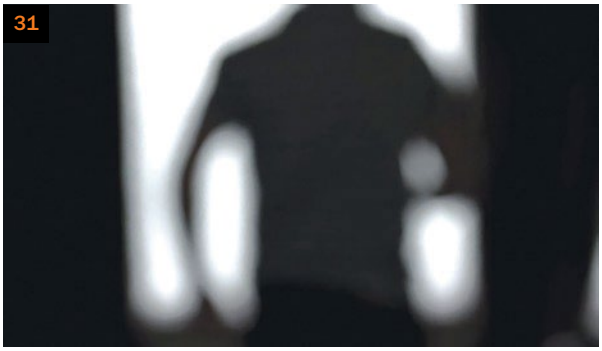
Helen moves to take the plate.
Jim pours a hot drink over Helens arm. Helen screams!



Jim assaults Helen by pouring the boiled mug of tea over her arm he has released his anger.

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HELEN: *I'm sorry!*
Jim walks to the window



Jim strides away in righteous indignation, convinced that 'justice has been done' from his skewed perspective of the world and Helen.

Cut to scene with Jim and Helen back in the hospital



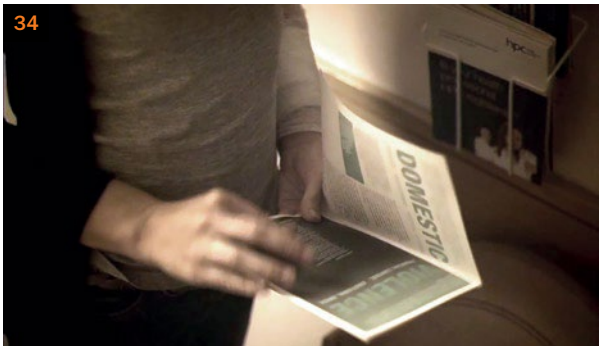
Scolding is a particularly common injury, as the controlling and manipulative abuser knows it's easier for the victim to cover up with clothing, unlike an injury to the face, throat or wrists. Helen will cover up this scold in order to keep herself safe by not revealing the true nature of the abuse to potential inquirers.

Jim kisses Helen.
JIM: *You alright yeah?*
Jim goes to the toilet and leaves Helen in the corridor.



Jim believes he has control over the situation. Confident that Helen has kept quiet about the injury he leaves her unattended in the corridor.

Helen picks up a leaflet on domestic abuse. She tears out the phone number and hides it in her top.



Helen therefore seizes the moment to take action. It is clear that she has bid her time to find the right information at the hospital. The pamphlet has a tear out segment; known as a 'bra-card', which has instructions and contact numbers for leaving an abusive relationship safely. It is called a 'bra-card' for the very reason that it's the safest place for many women to hide it.

Cut back to scene at home with Helen in the bathroom with Liam.
LIAM: *Mum? Mum? Are you Okay? Mum.*
HELEN: *We've got to get out of here.*
LIAM: *Mum what's he done to you?*



Helen has clearly suffered physically from the assault, and has consequently passed out. As she regains consciousness, her son discovers her. Liam's previous belligerence changes rapidly to concern and worry as he sees the state his mother is in.
See footnotes for more

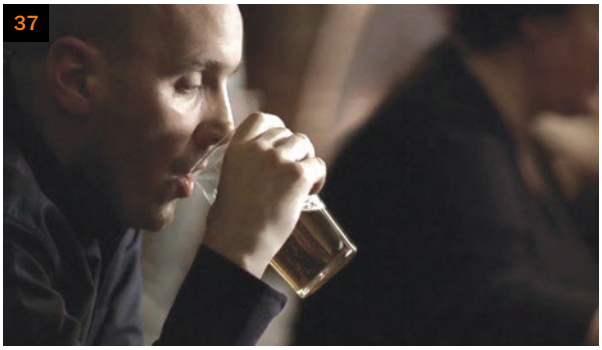
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HELEN: *Liam it's nothing alright.*
HELEN: *Liam it's nothing alright.*
LIAM: *Mum what's he done?*
HELEN: *Just do as I say yeah. I want to get out of here. Alright?*
Please. Please.



Liam has witnessed an attack upon his mother; aware of the emotional impact of her physical state upon her son, Helen covers up her injuries and focuses Liam on making an escape from their home.
See footnotes for more

Cut to scene of Jim in pub drinking.



It is next to impossible for Jim to keep his treatment of Helen a complete secret from Liam in the way he does other people, because Liam is almost always around. So in the build up to this scene we imagine that Jim has chosen instead to hook Liam into patterns and dynamics of the abuse, manipulating his son's perceptions and trying to win his loyalty.

Cut back to Helen and Liam.
HELEN: *Now you just listen to me. Be strong .Yeah? Be strong for me and for yourself and everything's going to be fine.*
Okay just trust me on this.
LIAM: *Okay.*



The shock of seeing his mother injured is enough for Liam to become supportive, though he will naturally feel conflicted between both parents, as he has to some extent been brainwashed by his father.

HELEN: *Alright. There's a good boy. We just got to be quick I just want to get going. Alright? I just want to get going.*



Helen stresses to Liam that time is of the essence. Fearing for their lives, victims of abuse do often flee from their homes with very little prepared in terms of possessions, this is for many the only option. However it is essential that those thinking of leaving an abusive relationship prepare themselves with a leaving plan.

Cut to scene of Jim sat in the pub again.



This scene is typical of Jim, in that he will often leave for several hours after an attack and wait for the dust to settle. On the subject of alcohol, it is important to note that although we can see him drinking, alcohol is not the cause of his behaviour, neither is sobriety his cure. Alcohol creating an abusive person is a myth, however alcohol is a disinhibitor so his behaviour will be worse when drunk or indeed under the influence of other drugs.

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Cut to scene of Helen at work with employers.
MARIA, HELEN'S BOSS: *We've found ourselves in a situation where we've had to address a number of issues, regarding your performance. Issues that have become increasingly obvious over the last year or so. Unusual sickness. Increased absence. Poor time-keeping. Lack of focus.*

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Helen has been called into a meeting to discuss her performance in the work place. The female manager addressing her employee has clearly not been trained in understanding the signs of abuse, and is therefore treating Helen's 'absenteeism and lack of focus' at face value.

OTHER BOSS: *Helen. Are there any personal reasons that we should be aware of, so we might be able to improve matters? At home perhaps? That might help us understand the situation more clearly.*

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This in addition with the cold, unfriendly atmosphere of the office where they broach this behaviour, gives Helen no incentive to disclose what is causing the problems, and thinks, given their impersonal, box ticking approach how would they react even if she did say what was really happening at home?

HELEN: *No. Nothing at all. I'm really sorry about it, I'm. It won't happen again. I can promise you that.*

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We also see the male HR manager broach the subject of domestic problems but it is too small a gesture to encourage the truth from Helen. This demonstrates that tackling Domestic Violence in the work place is more a cultural change of awareness, understanding and care, rather than simply saying something because he felt he had to.

MARIA: *Err, well, err. Please consider this a verbal warning.*

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See footnotes for:
Signs to watch out for in employee behaviour
One notable, positive example from the United States of dealing with abuse in the workplace

HELEN: *Thank you.*
MARIA: *I'm sorry Helen. Err. We wouldn't like to lose you.*
HELEN: *Thank you.*
MARIA: *Okay.*

45



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Cut to scene of Helen coming out of work. Jim in the car, waiting.



Helen exit the premises at the same time as a male colleague. This is a simple co-incidence, one that Helen barely notices yet it is enough ammunition for Jim to feed on.

JIM: *C'mon Helen. Have a purpose won't you. You alright?*
Helen gets into the car and sighs.
JIM: *Who's that?*
HELEN: *What are you talking about, who's...*



Jim brings the situation to a point of conflict by immediately accusing Helen and this passing colleague of having an affair, which both characters and audience know is a ridiculous notion.

JIM: *Eh?*
HELEN: *Who?*
JIM: *What are you having a go at me for? You've just come out of work with a work mate. I'm taking a bit of interest. I've asked you who he is.*



Jim knows that the bigger a deal he makes about the most insignificant of incidents, the more he can emotionally suffocate Helen.
This drip-drip affect of emotional abuse successfully enables Jim to increase control over a weakening Helen over a longer period of time.

HELEN: *I don't know who you mean. I just don't know who you mean.*
JIM: *You winding me up now. You just walked out of here now with a fella. I've just said who is he.*



Helen is probably tired after a day's work and the pressure is immediately put on by Jim.

HELEN: *What that guy who just said goodbye?*
JIM: *Yeah.*



Helen is forced into a situation of having to justify and defend herself for behaviour that is completely normal.

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HELEN: *I don't even know him. He's someone on my floor. He's being polite.*
JIM: *You just walked out of there with a...*
HELEN: *Can we just go home please? Now. Please.*



Helen, still demonstrating some signs of strength in the relationship, states her intolerance of the situation and it is enough to shut Jim up, though this in itself may trigger a harder, more physical response from Jim later on should he decide to dwell on it.

JIM: *Alright, fair play. Don't ask me to take an interest in your work again. That's all I was doing wasn't it?*



Jim ends the argument saying that he was just innocently 'showing an interest'. Jim downplays his behaviour to minimise his abuse, and to make Helen feel as if it's actually her behaviour that is unreasonable.
Again a mind game, that in one incident can be shrugged off, but constantly over a long period of time is extremely destructive.
See footnotes for more

Cut to scene of Helen reading the phone number she'd kept from the leaflet.
Helen calls the number.



Helen makes a call to the helpline that was written on the 'bra-card' section of the pamphlet she found at the hospital.

HELPLINE WOMAN: *Hello. Its Okay. Take your time. Do you want to talk?*
HELEN: *Yes.*
WOMAN: *Yeah? Okay. Are you feeling unsafe? Are you hurt?*
HELEN: *Yes.*



As seen in this clip, the person receiving Helen's call has been trained to deal with victims in highly volatile and dangerous situations, and knows instinctively to take the lead on the call given Helen's anxiety and nervousness.

WOMAN: *Yeah? Okay. There's a room here. This evening if that would make you feel safer. Yeah?*
You'd like that would you?
Helen is crying...
HELEN: *Yeah.*



This is the first time Helen has acknowledged her abuse to someone. This is a very difficult thing to do for someone who has suffered in silence for so long.
What this does indicate for Helen however is that by making the call, she is gaining strength, through taking positive action to break away from the abuse.
See footnote regarding the response from the telephone support service/refuge.

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Cut to scene of Jim in pub with a mate, Paul.



Whilst Helen is attempting to leave, Jim is keeping his head down in the pub with his friends who naturally are unaware of the destruction he has left behind at home.

JIM: *What about him this week, the fella who tried to have his wife killed, d'you read that?*
PAUL: *No.*
JIM: *He got a hit man and everything.*
Paul laughs.



Here Jim's character and public image is one that is friendly, sociable and self deprecating, and not necessarily someone on the surface you would imagine as an abusive male, he does however tell a derogatory joke.

JIM: *No he did. The hit man said as she comes out of work. He was going to put a single bullet right underneath her tit. The fella said, I want her killed not Fucking 'knee- capped!"*
They both laugh at the joke.
JIM: *What time is it Paul?*
PAUL: *Err, ten to ten.*



This joke whether funny or not is open to interpretation. A sexist joke does not an abuser make and isn't an obvious sign of his behaviour, as indeed comedy thrives on political incorrectness. What it does indicate however is that Jim is able to switch his personality when it suits him and is readily able to forget his previous actions.
See footnotes for more

JIM: *I'd better ring Helen. If I don't ring her by ten o'clock she gets paranoid. Starts accusing me of being out all night.*
PAUL: *She's right isn't she?*
JIM: *My misses is always right mate.*
PAUL (TURNING TO THE BARMAN): *Now he's learning eh.*
JIM: *Back in a sec. Get them in.*
PAUL: *Sure alright. Same again?*



Jim looks at his watch – it is time for him to check up on Helen. He makes a big deal to his friends about Helen being paranoid unless he reports in. This is the complete opposite of what's really happening but it is important for Jim and his public image to project himself as the hard done by husband to dramatically contradict his actual behaviour.



This phone call provides an insight into the monitoring and surveillance Jim conducts to maintain control of Helen. This constant psychological pressure reminds Helen that even when he is not there, he is keeping tabs on her.
See footnotes for more

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Cut back to Helen talking to Help Centre.



Not surprisingly, Helen is deeply upset as she continues to open up about what is happening in her life.

WOMAN: *Right, well now I've got all your details.*
HELEN: *Yeah.*



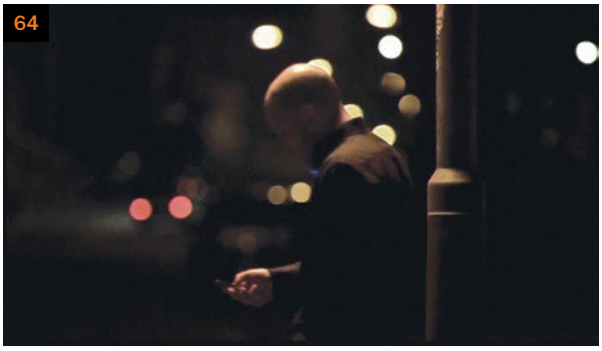
Helen is advised to bring bank details, a driving licence, passport and social security etc. This is because many of the women in refuges are expected to rely on state handouts, and will therefore need valid ID and a means of receiving money.

WOMAN: *Remember to bring your personal documents with you if possible it just makes things easier alright? Have you got that? That's really good... Make sure that he's nowhere near when you leave. Okay?*
HELEN: *Yeah*



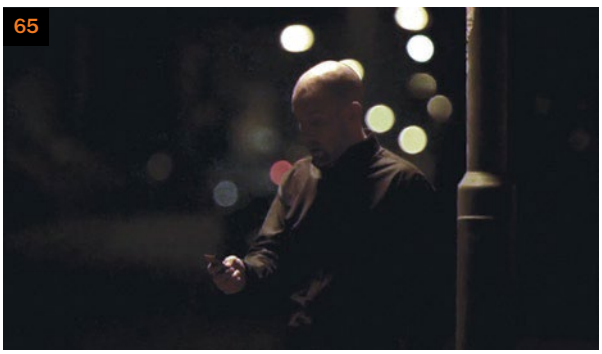
The helpline advisor reiterates that she should ensure Jim is nowhere near when she leaves. Safety for the leaving victim is paramount.

Cut to scene of Jim on his mobile outside the pub.



Jim can't believe that he can't get hold of Helen, who always picks up the phone, especially after he has reasserted control. Her being unavailable is enough to make him very nervous because it means decreasing control. He panics at the thought of her telling someone.

JIM: *No you don't. No you don't. No you fucking don't!*
Cut back to Helen on the phone to the Helpline.
WOMAN: *I'll see you at the station in half an hour.*



We see Jim's obsessive behaviour as he hits speed dial again and again, waiting for the exact moment for the line to be free and for him to punish her. This is the build up to the verbal abuse Helen is about to suffer.

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HELEN: *Alright thank you.*
WOMAN: *Okay. Stay safe.*
HELEN: *Alright. Okay thank you. I'll see you then. Thank you bye.*
WOMAN: *Bye.*

66



Helen feels a sense of relief at having shared what has been happening and starts to feel there might be a way out of the situation.

Helen hangs up the phone.
JIM: *Answer this fucking phone you stupid slag!*
The phone rings at home.

67



Jim is getting more and more agitated about what is happening, with Helen no longer in his direct control.

LIAM: *C'mon just open the door. Quick. Mum quickly.*
HELEN: *Wait just stay there. Don't you go out alright? Don't go out yet.*
HELEN (ANSWERING THE PHONE): *Hello.*

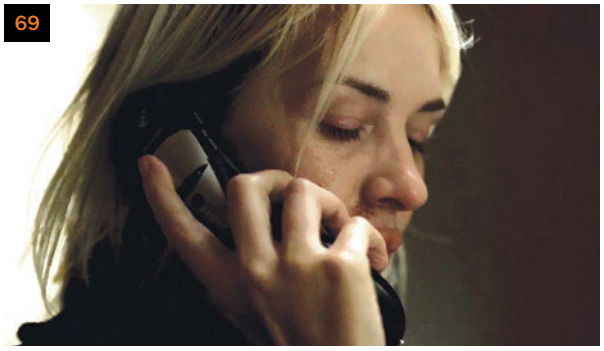
68



Liam is agitated and just wants to leave now that this seems a real possibility. He can't understand why his mum hesitates.
Another few moments and they might have been out of the door. But the phone rings.

JIM: *Hello love. You alright?*
HELEN: *Yeah. Fine.*
JIM: *Yeah? Why was the phone engaged?*
HELEN: *What are you talking about?*

69



Jim lures Helen into a false sense of security by appearing seemingly calm before enquiring about who she was on the phone to.

JIM: *Where are you? Why was the phone engaged?*
HELEN: *I'm at home. What are you talking about?*

70



Jim's question implies that he thinks Helen should never be using the phone. This may be one of the rules that Jim has made to maintain his control.
The fact that Helen has been on the phone instantly makes Jim feel suspicious, tense and angry.

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JIM: *Huh? Who was you talking to?*
HELEN: *I wasn't talking to no-one.*



In this sequence it becomes clear that Jim is fanatically jealous.

JIM: *Huh? What... you on the phone to your new fucking boyfriend? What while my boy's upstairs in bed? You slag!*
HELEN: *I don't know what you're talking about. Listen, listen. I don't know what you're talking about I was trying to call you and...*



Jim verbally assaults Helen with accusations that she is cheating on him and makes serious violent threats to her person.

JIM: *Listen to me. Don't fucking lie to me Helen! Do not fucking lie to me!*
HELEN: *I'm not lying to you.*
JIM: *If I find out you're fucking lying to me you cunt I swear I'll come home and I'll cut your fucking face open!*



Since Jim is openly violent, she is forced to consider what the consequences of attempting to leave him could be, including whether he might try to kill her.

HELEN: *Listen listen. Just calm down alright. I. What happened right I was trying to call you and you were trying to call me, and, you know, it just, we were both on the phone together.*



A quick thinking Helen responds by appeasing Jim.

JIM: *Listen to you Helen you fucking slag you're stuttering. B b b b b!*



...though as we can see, there is little she can do to soften his tirade of abuse.

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HELEN: *Yeah I'm stuttering because I'm trying to make you see sense, that's why I'm...*
JIM: *Stop lying to me!*
HELEN: *I'm not lying to you.*



The emotional experience for Helen from these verbal attacks can be similar to that of a physical or sexual assault.

JIM: *Listen!*
HELEN: *What are you talking about?*
JIM: *If I find out you're lying to me, right, I will come home, I will cut your fucking face open! That cunt won't even want to look at you, let alone fuck you, you...*



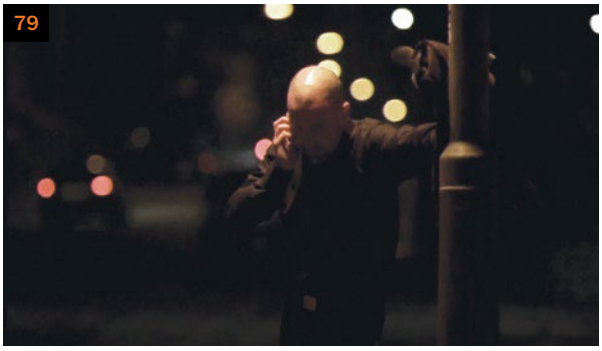
Millions of abused women have never been beaten but live with repeated verbal assaults. The scars from mental cruelty can be as deep and as long lasting from punches or slaps but are often not as obvious. In fact even among women who have experienced violence from a partner, half or more report that the man's emotional abuse is causing them the greatest harm.

HELEN: *I don't know what you're talking about. You just.*
JIM: *Don't lie to me Helen!*
HELEN: *Honestly, you're just being silly. I don't know what you're talking about.*



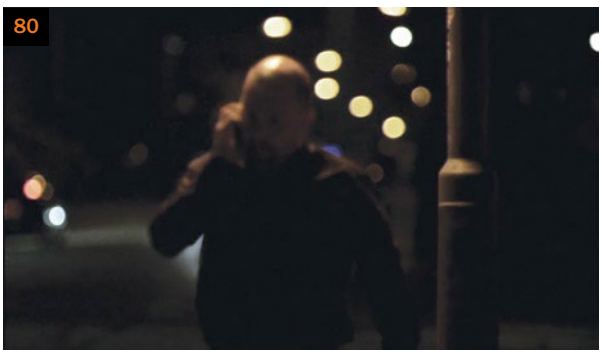
Jim piles on the pressure. Helen has to think on her feet.

JIM: *Right listen to me! LISTEN TO ME! Shut up!*
HELEN: *The only reason I called you if you really want to know is because I'm missing you.*
JIM: *Where's Liam?*



Unwilling to listen , Jim goes from arguing to shouting aggressively, asserting his control.
By appealing to his ego, Helen manages to get a temporary break from Jim's verbal assault.

HELEN: *Well, Liam's, he's missing you too, he's in bed. Alright? I'm missing you. I was worried.*
Alright? I just wanted you to come home.
JIM: *Right. Well you needn't worry cos I'm coming back now!*
Right I don't want to talk, fuck you. I'm coming back now!
Jim hangs up.



But it doesn't last long.

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Helen and Liam go to the door. Helen takes in a huge breath.
She opens the door. Liam goes out to the car and looks back to Helen who is shaking her head while standing at in the doorway.



Jim's threats have taken hold of a fearful Helen who despite her progress and plans has been left unsure as to whether to leave.
It essential for anyone leaving an abusive relationship that they know they can safely leave. Any chance of being caught leaving by an abusive partner can result in further injury and at worse death.

Helen and Liam head off walking down the street and bump into Jim, who hits Helen in the face.



Helen imagines being caught whilst fleeing with Liam, this gives us a clear insight into her worst fear, furthering our understanding of why she chooses to stay.

Flash back to Helen at home before she leaves.
HELEN: *I can't do it. It's just not safe.*
LIAM: *Do you want me to go to bed?*
HELEN: *Yeah.*



The painful look of resignation on his face shows that Liam fully understands the situation.
This is because he has been here on several occasions before.
He knows that once again they have failed to leave. Defeated, but respectful of his mother, he returns to bed.

Liam goes upstairs and Helen takes her coat off and carefully replaces her shoes in the shoe rack.



Helen covers her tracks. Here we gain insight into the tragic level of fear and scrutiny that has been installed by Jim to make Helen work so hard to avoid any suspicion.

Cut to scene of Liam and Helen in his room.



Liam and Helen share some time together and try to act normally but neither of them can have the comfort, reassurance and safety they need.

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Cut away to a scene with Helen getting undressed for bed (revealing her bruises on her back).
Helen gets into bed alone, sobbing.



THE FINAL SCENE: an utterly defeated Helen returns to bed, awaiting the arrival of Jim. From here, we do not know how Jim will react upon finding her home.

Will he be pleased that he's maintained control and be caring and attentive or will he punish her further for not answering the phone when he tried to make contact?

Either way we have to consider the alternative of being caught leaving and respect Helen's decision to stay put on this tragic occasion when she has potentially saved both her and her son's life.

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FOOTNOTES

This section provides useful additional learning points for which there was not space in the main body of the document. We would like to see this section expand steadily as different people with different perspectives offer their insights into the learning behind the drama of *Leaving*. If you would like to contribute please email: info@socialfilmdrama.com

35 As many men are physically much stronger than their female partners, a violent assault will leave their partners requiring hospital attention, however the secretive nature of abuse will often force victims to heal at home causing them to miss time with friends, family and at work. In terms of the latter, this individual case when multiplied across a number of incidents across the UK has a huge impact upon the economy due to absenteeism.

36 Victims of physical assault will go to great lengths to hide their injuries from loved ones in order to protect them. Also with much younger children, they will turn *Leaving* into a game that will keep the child focused and occupied during this potentially traumatic time.

39 A leaving plan that can be kept to at very short notice; this should include packing passports, bank documents, social security details necessary for admission into a refuge for example. Leaving an abusive partner is by far the most dangerous time for a victim. Most deaths attributed to domestic violence happen during the instant of leaving and is better achieved during a quiet moment, rather than an impulsive moment such as during, or shortly after an attack or argument.

41-45 Signs to watch out for in employee behaviour are:

- The employee or co-workers' reporting an injury. The employee may openly state that the partner caused the injury as an accident; this may be true but also be wary this may be a cover up.
- The employee showing feelings of fear and social withdrawal.
- Bruises or physical complaints that show evidence of assault.
- Intermittent crying and/or outbursts of anger while talking with a domestic partner on the telephone or in person at the workplace.
- Pronounced disturbance of mood (e.g., frequent and prolonged periods of depression, irritability, anxiety, and apathetic withdrawal).
- Increased absenteeism or reduced productivity.
- Spouse or partner makes disruptive visits to the workplace.
- Lack of concentration.

What can you do as a colleague?

One notable, positive example of dealing with abuse in the workplace was in the US in the 90's. A woman suspecting that her co-worker was being abused at home, kept a secret logbook of incidents when she glimpsed half hidden injuries, or overheard her being verbally abused down the line at work.

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This victim was so visibly shaken and then later left introverted by the calls that the woman instinctively knew she would be too scared to share. So rather than confront the woman who she knew but not that well, the conscientious colleague kept details of dates, times and details on the co-worker's behalf.
Later that year, when the woman found the strength to leave and testify against her abusive partner; the logbook was used as a valuable source of evidence in the case, where the man was consequently imprisoned.

52 Another common mind game is for the abuser to accuse the victim of doing what they themselves are doing, this reflective projection of self-behaviour onto the victim is particularly effective because the effects of the abuser's behaviour are already present and alive within their relationship. In extreme circumstances, the victim is so psychologically ground down that they no longer know who is doing what to whom.

53 According to the Helpline: "There are numerous services available to those suffering from domestic violence but the twenty four hour national domestic violence helpline run in partnership by Women's Aid and Refuge is the main number to call in the UK. The helpline provides access to twenty-four hour emergency refuge accommodation, as well as an information service, including safety planning and translation facilities to thousands of women who suffer at the hands of an abusive partner."

55 In this instance, for dramatic purposes only, we have combined the helpline service advisor and the local refuge offering a room for the night to move the story along. In reality the advisor and local refuge would liaise with the caller separately.

58 On a film making level, the joke was an improvisation by the actor that was kept in the film on the basis that it would challenge the audience by encouraging them to laugh with a character they disliked, this in turn would force the audience to question; what is a sexist, and indeed violent joke and what is its intention when expressed? Is it to sanitise and minimise the abusers harm against women, or is it a harmless joke shared between friends?

60 In extreme cases, some abusive men will keep surveillance of their partners through installed cameras in the home, and will call repeatedly throughout the day with a limit placed upon the number of rings until pick up, to ensure that their partner is completely trapped within the home.

61, 62 & 63 Helen has been provided advice by the helpline about having the necessary belongings with her to prepare for life in the refuge. Belongings such as bank details, a driving licence, passport and social security etc. This is because many of the women in refuges are expected to rely on state handouts, and will therefore need valid ID and a means of receiving money. This is not because domestic abuse only happens to people from poor social economic background that are more likely to rely on benefits, what is more likely is that the abused person has over the years been financially controlled by their partner, and will probably have no means of their own income having left.

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Financial abuse is just one of the many means of control used in an abusive relationship.
This can be in the form of the abuser stealing from the victim and their family, keeping money in a hidden account that only they can benefit from, or even not allowing the partner to work at all, saying that they don't need more money.
Ultimately taking away the option of their partner working, potentially leading to a lack of independence, self-esteem and confidence.
One such example of how money is used in extreme circumstances is a husband who repeatedly calls his wife fat and ugly. She in turn knowing that he holds the purse strings will confront these accusations and say that she should then have money for gym membership, or simply running shoes to keep in shape.
Of course, as logical an argument as this is, the abuser who has financial control will not allow his wife the money to feel good about herself, yet will continue to comment on her physical appearance. Because ultimately it is important for the abuser to ensure that their victim has low self esteem in order to maintain control. The last thing they wants is the partner taking control of her their body and identity, feeling more confident and having any psychological strength to leave.
Also again, at the end of this scene: the helpline advisor reiterates that she should ensure Jim is nowhere near when she leaves. Safety for the leaving victim is paramount.

64 Jim phoning home simply can't believe that he can't get hold of Helen, who always picks up the phone, especially after he has reasserted control. Her being unavailable is enough to make him very nervous because it means decreasing control. He panics at the thought of her telling someone about what's happened.
Here we see Jim's obsessive behaviour as he hits speed dial again and again, waiting for the exact moment for the line to be free and for him to punish her. This is the build up to the verbal abuse Helen is about to suffer.

65-80 Jim lures Helen into a false sense of security by appearing seemingly calm before enquiring about who she was on the phone to. A quick thinking Helen responds by appeasing Jim though as we can see, there is little she can do to soften his tirade of abuse.
The differences between the verbally abusive man and the physically abusive man are not as great as many people believe. There are millions of abused women who have never been beaten but who live with repeated verbal assaults. The scars from mental cruelty can be as deep and as long lasting from punches or slaps but are often not as obvious. In fact even among women who have experienced violence from a partner, half or more report that the man's emotional abuse is causing them the greatest harm.
In this sequence we see that Jim is fanatically jealous. He verbally assaults Helen with accusations that she is cheating on him and makes serious violent threats to her person.
The emotional experience for Helen from these verbal attacks can be similar to that of a physical or sexual assault.
The victim is left feeling violated, debased and traumatised. For Helen, getting away from Jim is clearly difficult since he monitors her movements so closely; it is a challenge for her to get away from him to the Refuge, especially with Liam, since he has isolated her from so many people who

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would have traditionally supported her. Here Helen has to draw entirely on her own strength, and many days she doesn't feel like she has any strength left. Since Jim is openly violent, she is also forced to consider what the consequences of attempting to leave him could be, including whether he might try to kill her.

In this instance, Jim's behaviour is clearly threatening enough to control Helen and add further fear to her leaving attempt, especially when he tells her that he is returning home.

81 Jim's threats have taken hold of a fearful Helen who despite her progress and plans has been left unsure as to whether to leave. It essential for anyone leaving an abusive relationship that they know they can safely leave. Any chance of being caught leaving by an abusive partner can result in further injury and at worse death.

Therefore when planning escape - a personal safety plan is a way of helping victims to protect themselves and their children. It helps them plan in advance for the possibility of future violence and abuse. It also helps them to think about how they can increase their safety either within the relationship, or if they decide to leave.

For further information and advice on a *Leaving* Safety Plan, we would recommend downloading The Women's Aid Survivor's handbook. An Audio download can be found online here:
www.womensaid.org.uk/the-survivors-handbook/print-and-audio-versions

82 Helen imagines being caught whilst fleeing with Liam, this gives us a clear insight into her worst fear, furthering our understanding of why she chooses to stay.

83 & 85 Liam fully understands the situation, as he has done on several occasions before, he knows that once again they have failed to leave. Defeated but respectful of his mother, he returns to bed. There is much to be read about the affects of abuse on children, too much to go into at this stage. However until recently, in a court of law, it was considered that provided the child did not witness physical abuse first hand i.e. were not in the room, that they were not affected by abusive behaviour. Given the events of the film, what do you think?

84 Helen covers her tracks. Here we gain insight into the tragic level of fear and scrutiny that has been installed by Jim to make Helen work so hard to avoid any suspicion.

86 **The final scene:** an utterly defeated Helen returns to bed, awaiting the arrival of Jim. From here we do not know how Jim will react upon finding her home. Will he be pleased that he's maintained control and be caring and attentive or will he punish her further for not answering the phone when he tried to make contact. Either way we have to consider the alternative of being caught leaving and respect Helen's decision to stay put on this tragic occasion she has potentially saved both her and her son's life.

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Below is a list of reasons as to why victims of abuse stay:
She may still care for her partner and hope that they will change (many women don't necessarily want to leave the relationship, they just want the violence to stop).

- She may feel ashamed about what has happened or believe that it is her fault.
- She may be scared of the future (where she will go, what she will do for money, whether she will have to hide forever and what will happen to the children).
- She may worry about money, and supporting herself and her children.
- She may feel too exhausted or unsure to make any decisions.
- She may be isolated from family or friends or be prevented from leaving the home or reaching out for help.
- She may not know where to go.
- She may have low self-esteem as a result of the abuse.
- She may believe that it is better to stay for the sake of the children (eg wanting a father for her children and/or wishing to prevent the stigma associated with being a single parent).

According to a recent government report. It is believed that it takes a victim of domestic abuse 26 attempts before finally leaving an abusive relationship.

This has been one of them.

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