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Colorado's State Court System,

On January 14th 2020, I was up in Evergreen Colorado for my weekly animal equine therapy session. While I was leaving, Jennifer invited me to come back that evening with my son. She told me she just wanted to have a quiet movie night inside the house, throw some steaks on the grill, and cook an easy dinner together so we could relax and put on some movies for the kids. I was heading back to my house in Denver from therapy in Evergreen, so I was thinking I should just stay home for the night, but Jennifer had been repeatedly stating that she did not feel good, and asked if I would please come. During this time, she had been struggling with her health for a while. She also needed a break from the family drama at the main house on Bear Mountain, and she just wanted a quiet night together at her non-profit ranch with our kids.

I had been working for Jennifer for about 4 years at this time, so I was used to helping her out at her home on Bear Mountain and with the legal work for both her law firm "The Animal Law Center" and her nonprofit "The Animal Justice Center." It was my understanding from the legal paperwork that "14 Hands Ranch" was solely owned by Jennifer's non-profit organization. Once the ranch was secured, most of our legal work moved up there.

As I was working at her home on Bear Mountain, I noticed a breakdown in the marriage between Jennifer and Donald Emmi. From an outside perspective, it looked like a beautiful, perfect, happy family. I would go up there and work as her legal assistant and would often have to read and write documents for Jen because she could barely see to read or write anything anymore. She was spending a lot of time leaving for doctor's appointments, so I helped her with the kids and managing the home as well.

Before the incident occurred at 14 Hands Ranch, Jennifer and I also worked together at her family home on Bear Mountain, where she privately spoke to me about fighting that had been occurring at the house. She had a bruise on her cheek, and she told me it was from fighting with Donnie. I did not hear or see any fighting while I was in their home on Bear Mountain, as I often left right after dinner. Jennifer then showed me a letter written by a concerned neighbor who was willing to testify to hearing the mistreatment of Jennifer from Donnie. Jennifer asked me personally if she should take the statement to the police station and go press charges. As her friend, I gave her the advice to not report anything to get the police involved and create criminal matters. I was worried how ugly a divorce between two attorneys could get. I tried to advise her that marriages have their ups and downs and the best way to do it is to stay separate, maybe take a little break from each other, and co parent as amicably as possible and just seek a 50/50 custody agreement if that's the direction the family decided to go.

Jennifer decided to listen to my advice, so when Jennifer became fearful and/or drained from the drama in the home, she would bring her children to "14 Hands Ranch" in order to play with other children, take care of the animals, and spend time with their Grandma Barb who loves them dearly and showed up every day to help take care of them. The ranch felt like a dream of peace and happiness and a network of animal/child advocates trying to make a difference in the community.

The day the incident occurred; Jennifer asked me to try to bring some food to "14 Hands Ranch" because she just thawed a couple steaks for the kids. I went out of my way to drive back down to Denver and bring groceries back up the mountain again so we could have a nice dinner and snacks together. I was surprised when I got to the ranch...because when I showed up there was a cake and birthday party decorations on the table. If it was a celebration, I was very happy to be there for the birthday, but I was very confused to see the birthday decorations because I didn't know who they were for. It looked like the new nanny, Carol, set up the table and she was sitting there at the table on her phone. To clarify, Jennifer's birthday is January 16th and Donnie's birthday is January 15th, so I was confused whose birthday decorations they were. I was also confused why the new nanny, Carol, was still there since she was new from Brazil and had a rough time communicating in English, so she never stuck around after her shift, it seemed like she wanted to leave because of the communication barriers between the two languages.

While I was in the living room with the kids, I heard Jennifer go into her room at 14 Hands Ranch and close the door. I could hear her yelling at someone on the phone repeatedly not to come there. When she came out of the bedroom, I asked her what was going on, and she told me that Donnie was coming in a very angry tone. Then I looked at the table and saw a birthday card with Donnie's name on it. Which also made me very confused because I

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thought the whole point of going to the ranch was to de-escalate the violence in the home, and to create a loving and peaceful environment separately for our children. I wasn't sure how these birthday decorations fit into all this or how I possibly missed the memo?

Obviously, Donnie speeding through the driveway and coming in uninvited, created a scene with Jennifer. I ran into the kitchen from the outside and the mood seemed happy at first when the kids started singing "Happy Birthday." I felt a moment of relief and gave him a hug and wished him a Happy 40th birthday. Then I was completely blindsided and caught in the middle of intercepting a black paring knife. I grabbed the knife from Jennifer's hand and threw it in the sink before anyone could get hurt. I helped pack the kids in the car, and I tried to take Jennifer to the hospital, because she still stated she didn't feel well. I was very fearful and caught in the middle with my own child as well. I tried to help Jen because I knew she was vulnerable from her current health issues. After the incident I read a doctor's note stating medical mismanagement. The doctor's note stated Jennifer was being treated with steroids, but the steroids were to be prescribed with mood stabilizers, which they were not. This helped me understand the "fight or flight" instinct from the trauma and anxiety she was trying to separate herself from.

I do believe, as the main witness (over the age of 18, with English as my first language) the "Birthday Party" event was a set-up, in order to provide an alibi to come to the ranch and provoke Jennifer. Donnie is a very successful attorney and also a successful hunter. He previously shot the fox in the yard who was eating the chickens. Donnie knew at that time that Jennifer was the most vulnerable, and could report the alleged prior incident in their home at Bear Mountain. I believe it was a good time to metaphorically "go in for the kill." I also believe, Karen (the former nanny/husband's new assistant at the law firm/suspected affair partner/confirmed new girlfriend) could be an accessory to the set-up. As someone who works as a paralegal as a living, I believe this incident was NOT properly investigated by the police. I am not sure if the officers even used a Brazilian Portuguese translator to read any text message exchanges between the nannies' in order to confirm any type of collaboration for the "birthday party." The police reports and testimony also stated that Donnie claims he owned the ranch as joint marital property. Based on the legal paperwork I assisted with, I do not believe that to be true since 14 Hands Ranch was solely in the non-profits name. If the ranch was solely owned by the nonprofit, then legally Donnie would be considered trespassing at the ranch, and from what I've been taught in law school about Colorado "Make My Day" Law, it gives the citizens of Colorado the right to use force to remove trespassers from their home or place of business. Something I also believe; a very successful attorney would be aware of as well. I also returned to "14 Hands Ranch" after the SWAT Team raided the house, because I received many calls from the current ranch hand. When I drove up there and went into the house, I found the exact black paring knife in the sink...exactly where I left it! The police didn't even retrieve the correct piece of evidence from my testimony.

I do believe this incident was a set up to gain legal momentum on Jennifer to make sure she went to jail and lost everything. I do also believe while Jennifer was on bond, Donnie went out of his way to make sure Karen was named as a victim in this crime to qualify for her for a U-Visa to save her from deportation. The neighbors saw a moving truck moving her in shortly after the incident. Karen could have faced deportation for adultery and a fraudulent marriage. I'm sure being involved in as a victim in a crime guaranteed her the full protection of the United States of America with a U-Visa. It really doesn't look good with Karen cheating on her United States Military husband and losing her newly gained green card from her sham marriage...especially since Jennifer had already started filing paperwork with the Au Pair program she came to the US with. I believe this angered Donnie and Karen and they focused on how to "win," while knowing how emotional it would make Jennifer to be replaced in her own home by her most trusted friend/employee.

In a matter of minutes, I watched Jennifer lose the most important people in her whole life. For years I've heard about her suffering in pain, more than any mother could ever be hurt, in order for one attorney to "win" over the other. In law school, our minds are trained to become very competitive and think of cases as a "win" or a "loss." I think in this specific incident...with two very powerful attorneys on the brink of a divorce with three children, either attorney would know how to tactfully use the legal system to silence anybody who could testify against the narrative with the threat of using the full extent of the law. In a divorce proceedings between Jennifer and Donnie there would be millions of dollars' worth of assets, two very successful businesses, and three beautiful children involved. This was a very physically, emotionally, and monetarily damaging case for every party involved. A typical

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example of how men say “it’s cheaper to keep her.” But in this case, it was cheaper to get Jennifer criminal charges and separate herself completely from the new life Donnie and Karen, the former nanny, had planned together. In any high stakes divorce like this, nothing makes people more emotional than children and animals. I do believe Donnie used his resources, intellect, money, and connections in high places to sink the mother of his children, like the Titanic. I believe the motive was to move the prior nanny in and begin a relationship with her, free from any “ex-wife drama.” The reason I believe this is because while in the police reports, Donnie claims he was so fearful Jennifer was hurting the children, but when I was there as a witness, he would go to “work events” in Miami, Las Vegas, and New York City and not only disappear, but lie to Jennifer about where he was staying, and his credit card statements – matched up with the costs of activities – showed he was paying for two people at different places than he stated. An example of this was the credit card statement that showed two tickets to ice skating in New York City. It was doubtful two grown straight men, would be going ice skating together. Jennifer started noticing an affair behind the scenes, she just didn’t know who it was with. As this case progressed, all the dots connected to Karen, the former nanny and Donnie’s new assistant at work, which was later moved in after the incident at the ranch.

I have also been fearful of the safety of me and my son as one of the only witnesses to this case, and no I am not fearful of Jennifer. Throughout this case, I have had Jefferson County Police officers call me relentlessly, threaten me, use unrecorded statements to create a false narrative in their favor, and have seen blatant lies in the police reports that to my knowledge were never properly followed up on. Every time I’ve tried to speak up, I’ve been threatened (as a single mother), to the point where I moved out of the jurisdiction because I am very fearful of what could happen to me or my son when I come on the stand to testify. Any time I said something or even posted anything on Facebook regarding the case, my attorney would call and yell at me for my own good and protection because Donnie and police officers were calling her threatening charges. I know so much more than the average person in this case because I was there for years at the offices, homes, and all the non-profit networking events. I was going to be a witness on the stand during the trial, but unfortunately, I never got that chance because I had been informed a plea deal had been reached in hopes that Jennifer could finally see her children that she loves. It has been brought to my attention from other’s that Jennifer wasn’t fully aware of what she was pleading to, due to a call in court date at the peak of COVID, the unprecedented global shut down in our lifetime.

I am asking the Court, the State, and even Governor Jared Polis and Marlon Reis (The Honorable First Gentleman of Colorado) to please help get Jennifer out of prison and back home with her family that loves her. I have always believed in The State of Colorado and had faith in our court system. I am proud of Colorado politics and our elected officials. I also fully believe that Colorado has a corrupt police force, with poor investigation and de-escalation skills, with very little consequences to the officers, and strong consequences to our taxpayers during legal settlements. I want to back up my opinionative statement by referring to the historical event of the BLM riots that were taking over and destroying the city of Denver at the SAME TIME as this case was heard in Jefferson County Court. The police department corruption allegations all ran concurrent to each other in 2020. The people of the State of Colorado were rioting for police reform, and the voices were heard, so the riots stopped after about a week and a half. So I am writing this letter now, four years later, because I never had a chance to speak up, and testify to the truth as I witnessed it. As a Sturm College of Law alumni, I know that one voice can make a difference, and that representation matters. I’ve been fearful to speak up or talk to Jen during her case because of retaliation towards me or my child. Her family and I are so worried that because of her declining health, and the age of Jennifer’s Mother, Jennifer’s family and friends may never get the chance to see her alive again, and for a case where nobody was physically harmed.

Jennifer was always an amazing mother, friend, animal advocate, and a nationally recognized attorney on the cover of Super Lawyers magazine. She is a beautiful person and has a wonderful family and many friends that love her. If there is anything we can do, this could be our last chance to save her. I know in my heart Jennifer would do everything in her power as an attorney to advocate for the life of her clients...that’s what has always made her such an amazing person. I witness for years how she gave up her career to be there every day for her children. She loves her children so much, not seeing them has caused the highest level of emotional damage to her and the children’s Grandma as well. I can’t even imagine how damaging it is for the children to have their mother and grandma disappear from their lives in one day. It’s time we advocate to save Jennifer’s life, and help use the resources to rebuild her life back, while the resources are still available to her. The legal system is meant to reform

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citizens and prevent recidivism in our communities. I do not believe she is a danger. I do believe she made mistakes while she was completely torn up emotionally and being medically mismanaged. Jennifer is a beloved member of our community, our workplace, and most importantly her family. We love her!

Sincerely,
Ashley Rhoads
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