

ENIGMA PLAYERS
ROBERT LECKIE SCHOOL, GOOSE BAY
present

"BEHIND CLOSED DOORS"

Cast

John (son) Chris Flynn
Jim (father) Dennis Brown
Lisa (mother) Amanda Pardy
Amber (daughter) Stephanie Williams
Cindy (John's girlfriend) Nova McCoy
Brent Frankie Pottle
Nancy Ashley Rice
Jessica Kathleen MacDonald
Narrator Lindsey Wiseman

Teacher Advisor Bob Jackman



Noelle Fry

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

(Stage is dark. Lights come up on narrator. Lights will stay up on narrator through all monologues. Narrator will just freeze.)

Narrator: Behind closed doors in Newfoundland and Labrador a crime is being committed. One woman in eight is being slapped, pushed, kicked or threatened by her husband or partner. It's been happening in rich and poor families, families from every cultural and educational background. The man who assaults his partner looks just like us. He could be our father, our brother, our cousin, our friend. Domestic assault is a problem that existed for years as a "family secret". It was after all "nobody's business" what went on behind closed doors. But assault is a crime, whether it happens on the street or in the home. As a community, we should all be concerned.

(Lights come up on Jim)

Jim: My wife just doesn't understand. The man is the king of the castle. All I want is a nice clean house and a hot supper ready when I get home from a hard day's work. Is that too much to ask? Why does she have to nag and make me lose my temper? Every man needs to blow off a little steam sometimes. She just has to know when to stop pushing me. I didn't mean to go as far as I did. I told her I was sorry. It'll never happen again. *(Lights go down on Jim)*

Narrator: Between 10% and 15% of all women in Canada will be assaulted by their partners this year. *(Lights come up on Lisa)*

Lisa: I just can't understand what I'm doing wrong. My friends tell me to get out while I still can. But they just don't understand, it's not that easy. Leaving would be admitting I've failed and I can't do that. I just need to learn to keep quiet when he's in one of his moods. He can be so nice sometimes and I love him so much. Besides, how would I cope financially on my own? The kids and I would never survive. I have to stay for the kids' sake. A family needs to be together. *(Lights go down on Lisa)*

Narrator: Children who witness assault exhibit the same symptoms as children who are direct victims. *(Lights come up on Amber)*

Amber: Why does Mom put up with it? She deserves better than that. I hate what Dad does to her. If he really loved her he wouldn't be treating her like he does. Can't he see what he's doing to our family? I want to tell someone, but I'm afraid they'll send Dad to jail. I don't want to be the one responsible for tearing our family apart. Mom'll never forgive me. I don't want him to go to jail. I just want

him to stop. And now John, my big brother is starting to act just like him. That really scares ma. Is this all part of the male image? If it is, I'm never getting married. I'll never end up like Mom. (*Lights go down on Amber*)

Narrator: Children who grow up as witnesses or victims of assault are 10 times more likely to live in a violent relationship when they are adults. (*Lights come up on Cindy*)

Cindy: Sometimes I get so confused. My boyfriend is so jealous. I can't even look at another guy, let alone talk to him. He knows I'd never cheat on him and yet he gets so jealous whenever I talk to another guy. He constantly tells me what to wear and never lets me decide where we will go. He must really love me or he wouldn't be so afraid of losing me. It's just that sometimes he scares me, but at least he hasn't hit me yet. (*Lights go down on Cindy*)

Narrator: 40% of all women are likely to be assaulted by their partners in the course of their lives. (*Lights come up on John*)

John: Cindy just doesn't understand why I get so mad when she talks to other guys. What's not to understand? She's my girl and it's up to me who she talks to. She should know that's the way a man treats the woman he loves. That's the way Dad treats Mom and they've been together for 17 years. That's the way it's going to be with Cindy and me. She'll never leave me. I won't let it happen. It's like Dad always says, you've got to show them who's boss or they'll try to wrap you around their little finger. Would she rather that I didn't pay any attention to her? (*Lights go down on John*)

Narrator: One in five people murdered in this country are women: killed by their partners. (*Lights go down completely. They slowly come up halfway on the kitchen table. Voices can be heard offstage.*)

Lisa: Relax a bit.

Jim: Don't tell me to relax. That's all I hear around here all day is to relax. What would you know about it? Just shut up.

Lisa: I know how hard you worked today.

Jim: What do you know about work? Why do you always put your five cents worth in, when you have no idea what you're talking about. I don't know how I ever got married to such an empty headed cheerleader like you.

Lisa: I was just trying to

Jim: Look! I've already told you to shut up and if you can't shut up, I'm going to have to shut you up!

Lisa: But Jim, you are going to wake the kids.

Jim: Look, that's it. I've had enough. *(A loud crash is heard offstage. Lights come up completely on the kitchen table. Lisa enters the kitchen with a black eye. She pours herself a cup of coffee and sits down at the table. She slowly touches her black eye and winces in pain. Jim enters the kitchen.)* Good morning darling. *(Lisa looks at him)* Sorry about last night. Things just got out of hand. It'll never happen again.

Lisa: I am sorry too.

Jim: I'll try to get off work early today. Maybe we'll rent some movies. We'll even get one of those tear-jerkers you like so much.

Lisa: Sounds nice.

Jim: Let's just put last night behind us. Today's a whole new day.

Lisa: Yeah, and who knows what's in store?

Jim: Now that sounds more like the woman I love. We'll talk more about it when I get home. *(Jim leaves. John enters the room and pours a glass of juice)*

John: Mom, I told you to call me an hour earlier so I could finish my math assignment. Just don't blame me if I get a bad math mark.

Lisa: Look, I had a bad night last night so don't you start on me too.

John: It's not my fault you married the guy. *(Amber enters the kitchen)*

Amber: How are you feeling Mom?

Lisa: I'm okay.

Amber: I don't know why you put up with it.

Lisa: Maybe when you're older you'll understand how much it means to keep a family together.

Amber: Maybe, but I still hate what Dad does to you.

Lisa: Love is worth some sacrifice.

Amber: I know I could never love someone like that.

John: You two are making me sick with all that mushy stuff. Give it up or at least wait until I leave.

Amber: John, I swear, sometimes you worry me.

John: Whatever. Mom, I hope you don't make that stupid mistake you did yesterday and put lettuce on my sandwich. You know I hate the stuff.

Amber: It wasn't Mom's fault. It was yours. You took my sandwich.

John: Who asked you? Shut up doorknob.

Amber: Don't trash me. I'm not the one who took the wrong lunch.

John: Well, maybe if you hadn't spent an hour in the bathroom trying to fix that face of yours, I would have gotten in there earlier. Then I wouldn't have been in such a rush and I wouldn't have grabbed the wrong lunch. By the way, you need at least two hours on that face of yours.

Amber: I'm not the one who waited until this morning to do his math assignment and you call me stupid.

John: I didn't call you stupid, I called you ugly.

Lisa: Will you two give it up or are you going to miss the bus. Now get out of here.

John: Mom, don't bother to fix supper for me tonight. I'm going to Rick's house to get ready for the party. *(John grabs his lunch and leaves)*

Amber: Mom, why don't you put some ice on that eye? It will take the swelling down. I will be home early to help you with supper. Bye, luvs ya. *(Amber leaves. Lights fade on Lisa sitting at the table thinking. Lights come up on Cindy and Brent at their lockers)*

Brent: Hey, Cindy.

Cindy: Hi Brent.

Brent: What did we do in Science class yesterday? I had a dental appointment and

couldn't make it.

Cindy: We took lots of notes on plant growth. You know Mr. Pike, he gives piles of notes. You can borrow mine if you want.

Brent: I'd appreciate that. I need to get my science mark up. I didn't do well on my last lab.

Cindy: No problem, just let me know if you need help with anything.

Brent: Thanks Cindy, you're an angel. *(John enters as Brent is leaving. He sees Cindy passing Brent her notebook)*

John: So who was that guy? I bet he was trying to get you to go out with him. Did you even tell him you have a boyfriend?

Cindy: He was just a guy in my science class. He was getting notes he missed yesterday.

John: If he was paying attention instead of staking out other guy's girlfriends then maybe he wouldn't have missed the notes.

Cindy: You have no idea what you're talking about!

John: I know a flirt when I see one.

Cindy: I wasn't flirting with anyone. I'm only interested in the guy in front of me. He's the only one who matters.

John: Yeah and don't forget it. You're lucky to have me. I could have any girl in this school I want and you know it. So don't give me a hard time.

Cindy: John, you're blowing things way out of proportion. It was nothing.

John: Well, it better not happen again. *(Changes the subject)* What's with the skirt anyways? If you didn't want guys looking at you then why do you wear such short skirts? You look like a tramp.

Cindy: I only wore this for you. I thought it would look nice for the party.

John: Well it doesn't. Be sure to wear something more decent tonight. I don't want my friends thinking I am dating some bimbo. Wear those jeans you had on last Sunday. You'll feel more comfortable in them and a baggy t-shirt anyway.

Cindy: Okay, calm down. I didn't mean to piss you off. It's just that sometimes you act like you own me.

John: Well, you are my girlfriend aren't you?

Cindy: I guess so. Just don't get so possessive. It scares me sometimes.

John: I'm not possessive. Would you rather a boyfriend who didn't care what you looked like? *(Bell rings)*

Cindy: The only boyfriend I want is you. *(Kisses him on the cheek)* I gotta get to class.

John: That's right, Miss Goody Two shoes won't want to have to get a late slip.

Cindy: So, I'll see you later tonight.

John: I guess so. I have to go to Rick's first. I'll meet you there. Just don't keep me waiting. *(Lights fade. Lights come up on kitchen table. Lisa is at table peeling vegetables. Amber enters)*

Lisa: I thought you were supposed to be home early to help me with supper.

Amber: *(quietly)* I was, but something came up.

Lisa: Are you okay?

Amber: *(shakes her head)* Mom, I have something to tell you but I'm not sure how to say it. I'm afraid you'll get mad.

Lisa: Honey, you know you can always talk to me about anything.

Amber: Well, I sorta got into trouble today.

Lisa: What kind of trouble?

Amber: You see, I wasn't paying attention in math class. So I got sent to the principal's office. We talked for a while and he thought it would be a good idea to talk to a guidance counsellor after school.

Lisa: So what did you talk about?

Amber: Well, we started talking about my problem in math class. He asked me why I wasn't paying attention.

Lisa: And why weren't you paying attention?

Amber: Mom sometimes I find it hard to forget what goes on at home. I really try to pay attention in class, but my mind wanders to the things that Dad does to you.

Lisa: *(Touches her eye)* You shouldn't let them bother you so much. Your dad has been under a lot of pressure lately. He doesn't mean to act the way he does.

Amber: That's not what the guidance counsellor said.

Lisa: You mean you told her about us.

Amber: I couldn't help it. I had to talk to someone.

Lisa: But Amber, I'm not sure if talking to some stranger is going to help. You could have talked to me. Families need to work out their problems themselves.

Amber: Well, we haven't been doing a very good job with it lately have we?

Lisa: It just takes time. Your dad will change. Things haven't always been this bad. We just need to help him through these rough times.

Amber: According to the guidance counsellor we need to help ourselves. Dad will never change as long as you allow him to do the things he does. You have to let him know it's not okay to hit you. It's not okay with you is it?

Lisa: Of course it's not okay. Do you think it's easy walking around on eggshells all day long, never knowing what will trigger his explosions? Each time he hits me I swear I'll never let him do it again. But I love him and what other choice do I have?

Amber: According to the pamphlets you have lots of choices.

Lisa: What pamphlets?

Amber: It's just some information the guidance counsellor gave me. According to what I've read there's lots of help out there.

Lisa: What kind of help?

Amber: *(shows her mother one of the pamphlets)* This one talks about talking to the police. They can get a restraining order against him so he won't be able to come near you and hurt you again.

Lisa: But what would your dad think about that? That would surely tick him off.

Amber: To hell with him. Would you please stop thinking about Dad and start thinking about yourself. If you can't do it for yourself, can you do it for me?

Lisa: But where would we go? Your dad would surely find us.

Amber: There's this place that can help. We could stay there for a while. They even had a number you could call. Wait, let me find it. *(She digs through the pamphlets)* Here it is..... the Libra House.

Lisa: *(Takes the pamphlet and flips through it)* maybe I could call. It would be nice to have some time to think. But what about John? I just can't leave him here with his father.

Amber: I'm not sure he'd mind. Have you ever noticed that John is becoming a carbon copy of Dad?

Lisa: Isn't that all the more reason to get him out, before it's too late?

Amber: It may already be too late Mom.

Lisa: Well, I at least have to wait until he gets home so I can explain things to him.

Amber: John has that party tonight and if you wait for him to come home, you'll lose your nerve. Dad'll be home by that time. You know you won't be able to leave then.

Lisa: I guess you're right. But what can I do?

Amber: We'll talk to John tomorrow. Maybe we can even get the guidance counsellor to talk to him.

Lisa: Do you think she'll help him understand?

Amber: Who knows? But let's not worry about that now. Let's take the first step. *(She picks up the pamphlet)* Call . Open the door to our problem.

Lisa: *(Takes the pamphlet)* Okay, I'll do it. *(Lights fade. Lights come up on Jessica and Nancy sitting on the front stage talking)*

Jessica: I would really like to see Cindy go out with someone else. I know John has started to scare her lately. There are lots of guys who would love to go out with her.

Nancy: I know. Rick said that John has been acting weird lately. He told me I should try to convince Cindy to break up with him. He thinks John is getting too aggressive with her. I don't want to interfere. You know what I mean.

Jessica: Yeah! Cindy knows we're here if she needs us.

Nancy: Shh, here she comes. (*Cindy walks on stage*)

Cindy: Hey guys, what's up?

Nancy: Not much. Where's your shadow?

Cindy: Oh! You mean John. He told me to meet him here.

Jessica: You mean he let you out of his sight?

Nancy: Will wonders never cease?

Cindy: Come on guys, he's not that bad.

Jessica: If you say so. We were just about to go inside. Wanna join us?

Cindy: No thanks. I think I'll just sit here and wait for John.

Nancy: Suit yourself. (*Nancy and Jessica walk offstage. Brent walks on stage and sits with Cindy.*)

Brent: Hi Cindy!

Cindy: Hey Brent, did you have any trouble with those science notes?

Brent: Nope, everything was great. Where is your boyfriend tonight?

Cindy: He's with Rick. I'm sure he'll be here any minute.

Brent: I thought he might have been mad at you for talking to me.

Cindy: Oh no, nothing like that.

Brent: Good. Are you ready for the algebra test?

Cindy: Well kind of, but I don't understand the difference between monomials and binomials. Combining like terms is hard too.

Brent: Oh that's easy. If you want some help just let me know. I do owe you one.

Cindy: Thanks, I'll keep that in mind.

Brent: Hey, do you want to go inside to get something to drink while you're waiting? We wouldn't want you to die of thirst on your boyfriend's account.

Cindy: Yeah, my lips would be too dry to make out with him then.

Brent: Talk about your dead fish. (*Cindy and Brent are getting up laughing. John comes on stage*)

John: What the hell do you think you're doing?

Cindy: John, we were just going inside to get a drink. (*John grabs Cindy by the arm*)

John: I thought he was just a guy in science class.

Cindy: John, let go, you're hurting me.

John: I can't leave you alone for 5 minutes. Is this what you do when I'm not around, cozy up to some other guy?

Cindy: John, please let me go, you're hurting me.

Brent: (*stepping in*) Man, I don't know what your problem is. But she said let her go. What part of that don't you understand?

John: Just mind your own business.

Brent: I make it my business when I see a guy roughing up a girl like that.

John: (*Makes a fist to hit Brent*) Why I oughtta.....

Cindy: John, don't. (*John lowers his fist and glares at Brent. Cindy turns to Brent*) Could you please leave us alone?

Brent: Are you sure? Will you be okay?

Cindy: Yeah, I'll be okay.

Brent: Well, just yell if you need help. (*Leaves*)

John: What a jerk!

Cindy: You don't even know the guy.

John: So now you're defending him. There is something going on between you two.

Cindy: I give up, John. I can't handle this anymore. I have done nothing wrong and I'm sick of constantly having to explain myself to you.

John: So what are you trying to say?

Cindy: John, you mean everything in the world to me, but I can't keep doing this. I can't take it anymore. I'm tired of defending you to other people. I'm tired of trying to be the person you want me to be.

John: Are you trying to say I have a problem?

Cindy: That's exactly what I'm saying. You need help. If you can't see that then I don't want to talk to you anymore. I've had enough. *(Walks off stage)*

John: Cindy, you don't mean this. Wait. *(John runs off stage. Lights fade.)*

(Lights come up on kitchen table. Jim is sitting at the table reading a note. John enters.)

Jim: What are you doing here?

John: What do you mean, I'm not allowed to come home now?

Jim: No, it's not that. I thought you'd be gone with your mother and sister.

John: Where's Mom and Amber gone at this hour?

Jim: You mean they didn't tell you. I thought you were in on this too. I guess this must be a conspiracy between the women in the family to keep us men in the dark.

John: Would you please tell me what's going on? I'm not following you. Are you drunk or something?

Jim: No, I'm not drunk. Here *(hands John the note)* read for yourself.

John: *(Reads the note)* Mom left you! Why?

Jim: heck if I know. All I know is I work my butt off to get home early, expecting to

spend a nice quiet evening with my wife. Instead what do I find - an empty house and some note with crap about needing some time to think. A man just doesn't deserve this.

John: I know. Cindy broke up with me tonight too.

Jim: Oh come on! You're not going to compare your pimply faced problems with mine are you? You can't compare puppy love to what I share with your mother. It's just not the same.

John: I'm not saying it's the same. It's just that we both lost people who were dear to us.

Jim: We didn't lose them. It's just their way of trying to change us. They'll come crawling back, they always do. Your mother would never survive without me.

John: I'm not so sure.

Jim: Then I say good riddance. There's lots of other fish in the sea.

John: Maybe if you try to talk to her.

Jim: And say what? Beg her to come home? A real man doesn't beg. He has to stay in control at all times. Besides the police were here with a restraining order. I'm not supposed to go near her. How am I supposed to talk some sense in her if I can't go near her?

John: The cops were here? When?

Jim: A couple of hours ago.

John: Man, everything was normal when I left this morning. How could one day turn everything upside down?

Jim: Your mom sure pulled a fast one. Just wait until I get my hands on her. No piece of paper is going to tell me what to do. She's **my** wife.

John: *(Hesitantly and fingering the note)* Dad, do we have a right to act the way we do?

Jim: Of course we do son.

John: I'm not so sure anymore.

Jim: Oh come on, you're not going to turn into a wimp on me now are you?

John: It's not that at all. It's just that I've always looked up to you. I was always so proud of how you could handle yourself and stand your own ground. In my eyes you could do no wrong.

Jim: And your point is?

John: I love you Dad and ever since I was a little kid, I wanted to grow up to be just like you. What scares me the most is that wish may have come true.

Jim: You're going soft on me.

John: Dad, for once will you just listen. Our lives seem to be following the same path. The woman that you vowed to spend the rest of your life with is gone. The girl that I cared more about than anything else in the world will probably never speak to me again. There seems to be a connection.

Jim: A man can always find another wife.

John: But can I find another mother? And what about Cindy? Am I just supposed to forget about her?

Jim: Give her some time, she'll come to her senses.

John: *(Picks up the note and reads it again)* Mom says that you need help. Cindy told me the same thing. *(He says this more to himself than to his father.)*

Jim: Women.

John: Maybe we could talk to a counsellor.

Jim: Counsellors are for nut cases. I'm not going to a head shrink. I haven't done anything wrong. We haven't done anything wrong.

John: Then why are they gone?

Jim: I guess someone must have put some silly notions in their heads. That doesn't mean we're crazy. No one in my family has ever gone to a shrink and it's not about to start now. We are just a normal family. We don't need to be spilling our guts to anyone.

John: Some family traditions need to be broken dad. You may not want to talk to

someone, but that doesn't mean you don't need to. Sticking your head in the sand does not mean you can let the rest of the world fall down around you. It's taken some time but I've finally realized something.

Jim: And what brilliant deduction have you made?

John: I don't have to be you, Dad. I'm not Jim. My name is John, I'm an abuser and I need help.

(Lights fade and come up on narrator.)

Narrator: You may know a woman in an abusive situation. She may be a relative, a coworker, a friend, or a neighbour. Talk to her, tell her it is dangerous to do nothing about the violence. She cannot make the violence go away. Almost always violence gets worst. The abuser will tell her it's her fault that the relationship is not working. She will try to change herself hoping to make things better. Remind her that the abuser is the one who has to change. He is the only one responsible for his actions and only he can change his behaviour.

Remember closed doors haven't kept this problem from spreading. As long as we treat it as "none of our business", this abuse will continue. By seeing it for what it is - a crime - we take responsibility for stopping the violence.

(Narrator walks off stage. Lights fade.)