

'Today I'm Alice': academic victim of child abuse with split personality pens autobiography and wins over £400,000

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An academic who was sexually abused as a child and developed multiple personality disorder sees her autobiography published this week.

Alice Jamieson, as she is now known, was raped repeatedly by her father throughout her childhood. The experience left her with complex psychiatric problems yet she went on to a successful academic career.

When her injuries forced her to abandon that career, she began writing about her experiences as a cathartic exercise. But last year her book was the subject of a bidding war by publishers. The rights were won by Macmillans and it is published on 1st May entitled: *Today I'm Alice*.

Alice is now 40. She began suffering sexual and other abuse by her father when she was two years old. She was systematically raped from the age of five.

An early memory is being put in a cardboard box with the family dog, with a choke chain around her neck and her father telling her to keep quiet whilst he occasionally tugged on the chain to scare her.

Another memory is of a night when she was five years old. Before he raped her, her father 'abused' all of her teddies and threw them out of bed.

On occasions he would bring her mother's cigarette lighter into Alice's bedroom and flick it by her feet. There was a mirror on the wall facing Alice's bed so it looked to Alice as though her feet were on fire.

On other occasions he would bring a jam jar with spiders in it and threaten to let them loose over her stomach.

From the age of four Alice had regular bouts of cystitis. This was so frequent that at about ten years she had to visit a children's hospital once a month for over a year.

Her parents broke up when she was 17, but the abuse by her father continued relentlessly. To cope with her situation, Alice threw herself into her academic studies. She went to university and gained a first class honours degree, but each time she returned home her father raped her.

Eventually when she confronted him about the abuse he raped her again and beat her up so badly she required hospital attention.

She had been undergoing psychiatric care since she was in her early teens, but now developed schizophrenia and began periods of self-harm and drug and alcohol abuse. She spent some time as an in-patient at a psychiatric hospital.

Each time she was abused Alice dissociated, detaching herself from the emotional and physical assaults, by creating other 'personalities', so that she – Alice – did not remember any of the abuse until adulthood.

This was a coping mechanism that was subsequently diagnosed as 'dissociative identity disorder', or 'multiple personality disorder' as it is more generally known. It is a rare condition, and involves 'splitting' the personality into different people, who often have no knowledge of the others.

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In spite of her horrific home life she was successful at school, gaining 11 GCE 'O' levels and 2 'A' Grade A levels. She went on to university where she gained a first class honours degree and later went on to study for her PhD. But she had to abandon this due to psychiatric problems and has worked only intermittently since.

In 1997 Alice reported her abuse to the police, who interviewed her father but decided that there was insufficient evidence to press charges.

However, she also took her case to lawyers, Pictons of Luton, who specialise in child abuse claims. They made a claim on her behalf to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA), who make payments to those who have suffered injury as a result of criminal acts.

They were instrumental in achieving a CICA award to Alice of £434,500, which may be the second highest such settlement.

The case was managed at Pictons first by partner Tracey Emmott, who heads Pictons' child abuse team and also represents survivors of the abuse at Haut de la Garenne in Jersey, and then by Emma Anthony .

Both are warmly acknowledged by Alice for their help not only in winning the award but for their support during the period when she felt nobody else believed her.

*'The CICA decision and the amount awarded is a clear acknowledgement of the seriousness of our client's abuse, and properly reflects the devastating and long term effect it has had on her life,' says **Tracey Emmott**. 'We're pleased to have won such appropriate and deserved compensation for our client, which we believe may be one of the highest ever awards in an abuse case.'*

'The circumstances of Alice's ordeal are truly horrific and even among the grisly and humiliating stories I encounter as a child abuse lawyer I'd have to say that I still find it almost unbelievable, especially of a parent towards his daughter.'

*'We're naturally delighted by the size of the award,' says **Emma Anthony**. 'From Alice's perspective, the result means she has achieved formal recognition of what happened to her and a resultant sense of closure. But it's also important in terms of the wider fight to raise the profile of child abuse. The recognition of the dreadful taboo surrounding this whole area is now becoming much more widespread, and so encouraging greater insight, understanding and recognition for the survivors.'*

'The hope must be that, as this awareness grows, the myths surrounding abuse are broken down and the perpetrators are brought into the open, the instances of abuse will diminish.'

Alice Jamison's claim against the CICA was managed by Pictons on a 'no win, no fee' arrangement, but they chose to accept only half the fees to which the agreement entitled them.

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