

# Fictional Movies with Domestic Violence Themes

Compiled by Nancy Flanakin, Librarian, National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence

**Affliction** (1999) – Stars Nick Nolte. Grown man with emotional and behavior problems recalls abuse he and his mother suffered during his childhood. Available from Amazon.com.

**Boys on the Side** (1995) – Stars Whoopi Goldberg (Jane), Mary-Louise Parker (Robin) and Drew Barrymore (Holly). Holly kills the abusive boyfriend of Jane in the course of defending her, later faces charges. A buddy/road movie that explores the special relationships that can develop among women. Available from Amazon.com.



**The Burning Bed** (1984) – Farrah Fawcett plays a woman reaching the breaking point with her abusive and brutal husband. Based on a true story. Currently available only from dealers in used DVDs and VHS videos, such as those who sell through Amazon.com.

**The Color Purple** (1985) – Alice Walker’s story about the growth to maturity and independence of a mistreated African-American woman in Georgia. Available from Amazon.com.

**Dangerous Intentions** (1995) – Stars Donna Mills and Corbin Bernsen. Plot summary from “editorial review” on Amazon.com:

*After years of being terrorized, Beth Williamson finally finds the courage to leave her abusive husband. But where can she go that’s safe? Her parents’ home, her sister’s home - wherever Beth tries to hide, her husband finds her and beats her, each attack more savage than the last. Only when she meets Kaye, another battered wife on the run, does the nightmare look like it’s coming to an end.*

*Looking out for each other, the two of them set up home with their children. But when Kaye’s violent husband reappears, a confrontation ends in murder, forcing Beth to choose between coming forward or staying safe among the ‘disappeared’... Available from Amazon.com.*

**Enough** (2002) – Stars Jennifer Lopez. Young mother flees abusive husband. Available from Amazon.com.

**Fried Green Tomatoes** (1991) – Includes domestic violence tale set in the 1920’s in Georgia. Available from Amazon.com.

**If Someone Had Known** (1995) – Stars Kellie Martin and Kevin Dobson. Plot from Amazon: Katie marries her first boy friend and at first they are very happy together. But when their first son arrives he becomes nasty being jealous about the boy, beating her and hanging around with friends all day leaving all the work to her. When their second child is on its way things get even worse, so that Katie decides to leave the house; but when she packs her suitcase the conflict climaxes to him getting shot.... Available from Amazon.com.

**Independence Day** (1983) – Stars Kathleen Quinlan, David Keith, Dianne Wiest. Not currently being distributed, but available from dealers in out-of-distribution videos, such as those available through Amazon.com. Wiest's performance as a physically abused housewife attracted much favorable attention.

**Kindergarten Cop** (1990) – Arnold Schwarzenegger plays an undercover cop who poses as a kindergarten teacher, protecting a woman teacher whose violent ex-husband is trying to hunt her down and take their child. Available from Amazon.com.

**Once Were Warriors** (1995) – A mother of five re-evaluates her 18-year marriage to her alcoholic, hot-tempered husband when his barroom violence moves tragically into their home life. Produced and filmed in New Zealand, the film also presents a view into the ways that urbanization has undermined the culture and strength of the Maoris, indigenous peoples of that country. The husband beats up his wife only when drunk. Available from Amazon.com.

**Raging Bull** (1980) – Robert de Niro portrays prizefighter Jake La Motta, who beats up his brother and his wife, as well as his ring opponents. Available from Amazon.com.

**Shattered Dreams** (1990) – Stars Lindsay Wagner and Michael Nouri. Plot summary from Amazon.com: Charlotte marries John. Things seem ok; John has a good job and he's going up in the world, working for the government. But every so often he loses his temper and Charlotte gets the brunt of his anger. During the 18 year course of their marriage, there are at least 8 incidents of physical abuse and countless of mental. Charlotte's family and friends tell her to leave John but she keeps going back, most likely because he has convinced her that she would be nothing without him. It finally explodes in a big divorce battle balancing on the cases of abuse. Available from Amazon.com



**Sleeping with the Enemy** (1991) – Julia Roberts plays a young woman who escapes her 4-year abusive marriage by staging her own death. Her husband learns that she is still alive and sets out to find and kill her. Available from Amazon.com.

**Sling Blade** (1996) – Plot summary from IMDb database from University of Phoenix (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0117666/plotsummary>):

*Karl Childers, now a grown man, is released from a psychiatric hospital where he has been hospitalized since the age of 12 for the murder of his mother and her lover. He returns to his childhood town and although being mentally handicapped, gets a job fixing small motors at a local repair shop. Karl befriends a young boy, Frank, and is soon invited by Frank's mother, Linda, to move into the family's garage. As a strong relationship develops between Karl and Frank, a confrontation builds with Linda's abusive and sometimes violent boyfriend Doyle. Written by [Todd K. Bowman {tkbowman@aol.com}](mailto:tkbowman@aol.com)*  
Available from Amazon.com.

**This Boy's Life** (1993) – Autobiography of writer Tobias Wolff, starring Leonardo di Caprio, Ellen Barkin and Robert de Niro. Tobias's mother marries a man who turns out to be an alcoholic who abuses both mother and son. Available from Amazon.com.

**What's Love Got to Do With It?** (1993) – The story of Ike and Tina Turner and her escape from her abusive marriage. Available from Amazon.com.



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