Mira and Thomas met overseas through their work. Mira was born overseas, with English as her second language; and Thomas is an Australian citizen. They married and had their two children overseas. From Mira’s perspective they were together for approximately fifteen years, however Mira says that Thomas is likely to believe that they are still together. Mira now lives in Australia with the children who are in high school. Mira arrived in Australia on a spousal visa and is now on a bridging visa, awaiting the issue of a spousal visa. Early in the relationship Mira stopped working to enable Thomas to pursue his career, which then required significant relocations to other countries so he could upgrade his qualifications; and has always involved Thomas travelling regularly and being away from home for lengthy periods.

Thomas’s controlling and obsessive behaviours were apparent to Mira from the outset. He repeatedly pressured her to go out with him; and despite her telling him that she needed time following the end of a previous serious relationship, he persisted. Thomas would regularly send Mira gifts and deposit money into her account. She told him she did not want these inducements and he must stop. Undeterred, and knowing how important Mira’s faith and traditions are to her and her family, Thomas announced to Mira that he had converted to her religion. Mira was shocked by Thomas’s preoccupation with her, and urged him to back off. He told her he would kill himself if she didn’t marry him and sat in the cemetery for hours brooding. Mira felt worn down by Thomas’s fanatical efforts to win her over and yet was impressed by his religious conversion. Eventually she felt obliged to marry him, and hoped that over time she may grow to love him.

Mira committed to helping Thomas advance in his career and to raising their two children, however their relationship was constantly fraught. Starting with their wedding, Thomas insisted on organising their shared life as he wanted it, and demanded Mira’s support for his obsession with extreme sports training and competitions. Events and holidays were meticulously planned without consultation with Mira. She and the children were expected to comply and if Mira expressed an objection she was bullied and intimidated, and on one occasion Thomas strangled her in front of his friend who was staying in their home. Thomas controlled the couple’s finances and required Mira to account for her spending and produce receipts. Thomas would then be away from the family for weeks at a time, with no contact, and Mira was left to parent alone. It was during these extended breaks that Mira felt she must tell Thomas that she was unable to continue in the relationship and that it was best they divorce. Whenever she tried to raise the issue with Thomas, he became angry and morose, and would lock himself in a room threatening to kill himself and accusing Mira of bringing harm to the family. On two separate occasions, Thomas wielded a knife at Mira, again threatening to kill himself. Mira was terrified of what he may do, including harming her and the children. The first time, acting on the advice of Thomas’s family, Mira rang the local domestic violence support service, and they arranged accommodation for her and the children until Mira knew Thomas had left the country. The second time, they relocated to a friend’s house.

After living in various overseas locations for a number of years, Mira decided that it was in the children’s best interests to settle in Australia. They have been here for a few years, and in Mira’s mind, the relationship with Thomas is over, though she believes that he does not want it to formally end so as to avoid any adverse financial consequences to himself. Thomas stalked Mira and the children whenever he returned to Australia. She has told him not to come near the house, but he now harasses Mira’s family by telephone. They jointly own two house properties, in Australia and overseas. Mira knows that if she were to apply for a protection order or to seek property orders in the Family Court, Thomas would be enraged and she could not predict what he might do. She fears he would become uncontrollable and be arrested. Thomas currently pays for the children’s education and living expenses; she would rather defer addressing her own legal issues than risk losing his financial support, though she remains fearful of him. Mira does what she can to encourage the children’s relationship with Thomas despite his minimal genuine interest or involvement in their lives. Mira is aware that for as long as these matters are unresolved, she and the children will continue to experience Thomas’s obsessive control over them.