

= Genevieve Lhermitte =

Genevieve Lhermitte is a Belgian woman who killed her five children on February 28 , 2007 . She killed each of her children by slitting their throats with a kitchen knife stolen from a local grocery store while her husband was visiting family in Morocco . After Lhermitte killed her children , she then tried to kill herself . The suicide attempt failed , and Lhermitte was taken into custody and charged with first @-@ degree murder . She was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment .

Lhermitte had regularly seen a psychiatrist and was reported to demonstrate serious mental issues . She claimed that she was driven to kill her children due to troubles at home (namely , living with an outsider who financially supported the family) .

= = Personal life = =

Genevieve Lhermitte was born on November 16 , 1966 in Brussels to Michel Lhermitte , a businessman and student , and Marina Schoevaert , a nurse . Lhermitte had two younger sisters : Catherine in 1969 , and Mireille in 1972 . Though she struggled with her coursework and self @-@ confidence during her secondary studies , Lhermitte graduated in 1991 with a diploma in French and History from the Educational Institute of Social Promotion of the French Community (IEPSCF) in Uccle . It was during the 1988 @-@ 1989 year at IEPSCF that Lhermitte met her future husband , Bouchaib Moqadem , who was studying mathematics and physics but did not complete his studies .

Lhermitte and Moqadem married on September 22 , 1990 , and moved into the apartment of Dr. Michel Schaar , a physician , with whom Moqadem was residing . Schaar had befriended Moqadem 's family in Morocco in the 1980s and served as the young man 's host in Belgium , and Moqadem considered Schaar as an adoptive father . While Moqadem worked at a convenience store , it was Schaar that was the primary financial provider . Lhermitte did not object to living with Schaar in his apartment as she thought it would be on a temporary basis .

In 1991 , Lhermitte was hired as a teacher . Shortly after beginning her new career , Lhermitte gave birth to her first child , Yasmine (b . August 13 , 1992) . Three years later , she delivered her second child , Nora (b . February 13 , 1995) . From June 1 , 1995 to August 31 , 1996 , Lhermitte was granted leave from her teaching position due to postpartum depression . After the birth of Lhermitte 's first child Yasmin , Schaar purchased a house for himself and the couple to live in , and he dedicated his apartment to his practice . In 1996 , Schaar hired Moqadem to serve as his filing assistant part @-@ time , then full @-@ time in 1998 . During this period , Schaar still covered most expenses , including vacations , house repairs , monthly allowances , and life insurance for each family member . Lhermitte gave birth to two more daughters , Miriam (b . April 20 , 1997) and Mina (May 20 , 1999) , before the family 's move from Brussels to the provincial town of Nivelles . Schaar paid the mortgage and lived on the second floor .

Tensions began rising between Lhermitte and her husband . Moqadem would spend long hours away from home , becoming a regular at a bar and a spa . In addition , he would take several trips each year to visit his family in Marrakesh , with the length of each trip ranging from a week to a month . Lhermitte 's first son and fifth child , Mehdi , was born on August 9 , 2003 . The following year , Schaar recommended that Lhermitte should see a psychiatrist and she began consulting the psychiatrist Dr. Diderick Veldekens in 2005 .

= = Crime = =

On February 28 , 2007 , Moqadem was expected to return from a trip to Morocco to visit his family . Lhermitte took her eldest daughter Yasmin to a dermatology appointment . After picking up the rest of her children from school and preparing lunch for them , Lhermitte heard a voice tell her , " the machine is running . " Lhermitte mailed two letters : a letter with jewelry for her sisters , and the other letter to her friend Valerie . In the letter to Valerie , she called Dr. Michel Scharr " a rotten bastard " who " stole " the intimacy between herself , her husband , and her children . She also accused her husband of being " deaf " and " blind " to her concerns regarding Dr. Scharr . After

mailing the letters , she went to a grocery store and slipped two knives into her shopping bag .

Lhermitte told investigators that , when she returned , she hid the knives in a drawer and called over her youngest daughter Mina while the other children were watching Spy Kids 3 . Lhermitte tried to strangle Mina , but when the child struggled Lhermitte resorted to slashing her throat with one of the stolen knives , all while speaking comforting words and apologizing to the child . Medhi was the next to be killed , the youngest and the only son . When her attempts to strangle her child again failed , Lhermitte cut Medhi 's throat and washed the knife afterward in the bathroom sink .

According to her account , Lhermitte then told daughter Myriam that she had a surprise for her in the office . When Myriam entered the office , Lhermitte told her to sit on a chair and wear a blue handkerchief over her eyes . Once Myriam was seated , Lhermitte took a marble plaque she found nearby and smashed it over Myriam 's head , and then cut her throat . Nora , who was allegedly Dr. Schaar 's favorite goddaughter , was asked to sit in a chair while Lhermitte slit her throat from behind . After Nora had been killed , Lhermitte wrote the letters " JUD " on the bathroom mirror in Nora 's blood , and later stated that she had intended to spell the name " Judas . "

Lhermitte 's last victim was her eldest daughter , Yasmin . The mother called over Yasmin and told her she had a surprise for her , just like she had done with Myriam . Lhermitte attacked Yasmin from behind as she entered the office , but Yasmin was able to dodge the knife by diving to the ground . After a struggle in which Yasmin suffered multiple stab wounds , Lhermitte stabbed her in the back and slashed her throat . With her children dead , Lhermitte then attempted to kill herself by falling on her knife . When she realized that the wound would not be fatal , she wrote " call the police " in red marker on her door and called emergency services to the house . Investigators found the four children tucked in their beds , some with stuffed toys in their arms .

= = Trial = =

The trial began on December 8 , 2008 and lasted about two weeks , ending December 19 , 2008 in the Assize Court of Brabant @-@ Wallon in Nivelles . Genevieve Lhermitte 's lawyers were Daniel Spreutels and Xavier Magnee . The jury consisted of eight women and four men . Genevieve Lhermitte confessed to the murder of her children , so the trial focused on what drove Lhermitte commit the crime . Xavier Magnee told the jury , " Your task is to discover why a woman who had hitherto been a perfect mother suddenly exploded . " This statement was made early on in the trial and started the thought process of what made Lhermitte so unstable that she would kill her own children . Prosecutor Pierre Rans began opening statements with a description of the scene that met emergency services on February 28 , 2007 at the former teacher 's home in Nivelles . The prosecutor asked for 30 years in prison .

During the trial , Lhermitte testified that her role as wife and mother was disrupted by having the middle @-@ aged Belgian doctor , Michel Schaar , living in the same house as part of the family . According to Lhermitte , Scharr accompanied her and Moqadem on their honeymoon and stayed in their room . Lhermitte stated , " We [Lhermitte and Moqadem] had to wait until he fell asleep before we could make love . I found that weird but Bouchaib said he regarded him as his stepfather . I think the doctor loved my husband in a platonic way . " Apart from explaining Scharr 's intrusion on her relationship with her husband , Lhermitte also mentioned their family 's reliance on Dr. Schaar : " He watched TV with us in the evenings and went on holiday with us in the summer . We depended on him financially . " In court , Lhermitte was asked why she laid the dead body of her 13 @-@ year @-@ old daughter Nora in the bathroom used by Dr Schaar . She replied : " I wanted to hurt him . Nora was his favorite . "

The trial ended with Lhermitte receiving the maximum sentence for the murder of her five children . The court and the jury did not take any extenuating circumstances into account . In her closing argument , Lhermitte said she would accept any punishment the court gave her and showed remorse for her actions . Earlier in the trial , psychiatrists had found that Lhermitte was not of sound mind when she committed the acts and should not be held accountable for her actions . They felt that she should be admitted into a psychiatric institution rather than going to prison , but the jury did not follow their opinions . Lhermitte had been battling with depression for many years . She

concluded that she saw the murder of her children and committing suicide as her only way out .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Trial billing = = =

Lhermitte filed for and received a judgment of divorce before her trial ; Moqadem at first appealed the decision but later withdrew his objection . Following the trial , Lhermitte was not able to pay for the trial costs , so under Belgian law it fell to her now ex @-@ husband to pick up the bill . This conformed to the Law of Belgium , with the state seeking funds due to have been shared from the sale of their house under their divorce agreement . The overall court expenses and fines were 72 @, @ 743 euros (about \$ 93 @, @ 000) . Moqadem said he was ? disgusted and revolted ? by the injustice of this billing system . Moqadem ? s attorney attempted to have the bill written off , calling for ? administrative requirements to be balanced by decency ? given the nature of the tragedy .

In February 2010 , Moqadem remarried Asmae Beldi , a professor of Islamic law at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences in Brussels . A daughter was born to the couple about a year later . In June 2013 , it was reported that Moqadem had lost 30 @, @ 000 euros in an investment scam and that he was being harassed by Lhermitte 's former attorney for further fees .

= = = Post @-@ trial lawsuit = = =

After being sentenced to life imprisonment , Lhermitte filed a lawsuit seeking ? 3m in damages against her psychiatrist , Diderik Veldekens . She said that had her psychiatrist rushed to see her while she was in her disturbed state , the crime would not have been committed . Lhermitte wanted to ? secure recognition of the prejudice genuinely suffered ? due to the psychiatrist ? s alleged inaction . During the trial , Veldekens reported meeting with Lhermitte after a first alarming letter , but couldn 't meet with her on February 13 , 2007 due to his full schedule . In December 2011 , the case was dismissed against Veldekens . The court ruled that the criminal charges against the psychiatrist were " irrelevant . "

= = In popular culture = =

Belgian director and screenwriter Joachim Lafosse released Our Children , a film based on the story , to positive reviews in 2012 . One reviewer called the film a " gloomy and penetrating psychological drama " that portrays the claustrophobia of a protagonist who lives in an environment in which " the walls are constantly closing in around her . " Our Children also attained an 93 % rating on the aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes . Émilie Dequenne , a French @-@ speaking Belgian actress , played the character based on Genevieve Lhermitte . Dequenne won the Un Certain Regard Award at the Cannes Film Festival and " Best Actress " at the Saint Petersburg International Film Festival for her role .

In December 2010 , Moqadem and Schaar filed a lawsuit against Lafosse demanding that they be able to review the film 's screenplay . The 4th Civil Chamber of the Court of Brussels ruled that the lawsuit was " admissible but unfounded . " However , production had already begun ? cast negotiations were finished , and the team had already approached the French government about receiving subsidies ? and Lafosse demonstrated no intent to hand over his work . The pair 's lawyer subsequently released an official statement : " Moqadem and Schaar feel that this is a violation of their privacy and do not understand why the filmmakers have so little respect for them . "