

Mother who vanished with kids for 16 years headed to jail

Children found living in squalor with mother in South Carolina after 16 years living off the grid



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A B.C. woman has been sentenced to four years in jail after being tracked down by the fathers of the two children she abducted in 1998. (CBC)

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A scheming British Columbia mother who vanished into thin air nearly two decades ago after abducting a boy and girl she had by two different men has been sentenced to four years in jail.

The woman — identified in court documents only as C.A.S. — was tracked down to South Carolina in 2014 after a global hunt by the fathers, police and missing children organizations.

She was remarried and living in squalor with the kids she had kept largely off grid for 16 years; they received no education, medical or dental care and had no legal status or identification in the United States.

"The children were deprived of an 'ordinary' childhood and the basics that most children take for granted," Port Coquitlam Judge Deirdre Potheary wrote in a [77-page decision](#).

"They had no place to really call home as a result of their frequent moves. They were required to live lies and could not maintain their own identities. They lived in constant fear of being discovered by authorities and either sent back to Canada to 'two bad men' or of being jailed in the United States illegally."

An alarming pattern

Potheary's decision details seemingly pathological attempts on C.A.S.'s part to alienate the men — known as J.B. and J.S. — from their children beginning before they were even born.

The Crown asked for a sentence of three years, but the judge said the offences warranted greater punishment. C.A.S. is going to jail for four.

She was married to J.B from 1990 to 1993 and J.S. from 1994 to 1996. But she separated from each of them shortly after learning she was pregnant.

Both fathers attempted to be part of their children's lives once they were born.

But in the court proceedings that followed, C.A.S. made allegations of abuse in both cases, allegedly coaching her daughter to say J.B. had sexually assaulted her and claiming J.S. physically assaulted his son.

She was initially granted custody of the children, but that began to change as the court battles wore on, the lies became apparent and judges started believing the fathers.

In May 1998, C.A.S. failed to show up at a scheduled B.C. Supreme Court custody hearing with J.B. She wouldn't be heard from again until 2014.

A global hunt

A Canada-wide arrest warrant was issued for C.A.S in October 1998 and charges of contravening custody orders were sworn against her.

The Missing Children Society of Canada worked with RCMP to find her. A link to Germany was suggested, so Interpol was asked to help.

"Photographs of the two children were digitally enhanced to make them age appropriate and were circulated around the world," Potheary wrote. "J.B. wanted to hire a private detective but it was simply cost prohibitive."

Then, in April 2014, J.B. and his wife found out that C.A.S.'s mother had a Facebook account. Their suspicions were aroused by four friends "covered with the image of a tiger's head."

Following that thread, they located a Facebook page and an Instagram account belonging to the daughter. One of her photographs had a caption reading: "My house is right across from this Church."

They pinpointed the church to Pacolet, South Carolina and immediately booked a flight.

J.B found the house and watched until he saw a girl come out on the porch. He called her by his daughter's name and she began to cry.

Shortly thereafter, C.A.S. emerged; they spoke and so began a process which would result in the children leaving with J.B, and the mother returning to Canada to plead guilty.

'This one act of cruelty'

In victim impact statements, J.B. and J.S. spoke about the time they had lost with their children. J.S. said he became an introvert, was diagnosed with major clinical depression and was unable to divert his thoughts from his son.

"I have never been able to experience the joy of helping (my son) to read and write and never had the pleasure of hanging a drawing of his on my refrigerator," J.S. wrote.

"All the little things a child goes through were robbed from me by this one act of cruelty."

C.A.S. also filed a letter with the court in which she claimed: "I left with only the intention of providing a safer and more peaceful environment for the kids."

But Potheary said nothing about the circumstances in which they ended up was consistent with that desire. The judge also noted that the children knew their fathers were looking for them.

"However, believing the lies and misinformation about their fathers that their mother had instilled in them and perhaps out of loyalty to her, they were afraid to reach out to their fathers and regain the life that they should have had," Potheary wrote.

"As a result, they continued to live in South Carolina in an ongoing state of fear."

The Crown asked for a three year sentence, whereas C.A.S.'s lawyer asked for a conditional sentence of two years less a day.

But in handing down a four-year sentence, Potheary said the offence warranted greater punishment than the Crown was seeking.