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Katherine Knight: Cannibalism and Life in Prison

The story of Katherine from her bad upbringing to abusing her partners, to killing the last one.

I first heard about Katherine's story from a podcast called *Cult Liter*. Episode 14 of the podcast is a 30-minute episode all about Katherine Knight and what she did. According to Spencer Henry, the creator of *Cult Liter*, Katherine is INSANE. So, let's dive in, shall we?

Katherine's Early Life

Katherine was born into a very dysfunctional family. Her mother, Barbara Roughan, had been married to Jack Roughan with their four sons in Aberdeen in New South Wales' Hunter Valley. Barbara had an affair with Ken Knight, a friend of her husband.

Because Aberdeen was a very conservative town, Barbara and Ken were forced out. They moved to Moree, New South Wales, which is about 4 hours south of Aberdeen. Barbara didn't take any of her sons with her. The two older boys stayed with Jack and the other two younger boys went to live with an aunt in Sydney (three hours south of Aberdeen).

After settling down, Ken and Barbara had 4 children, Katherine being one of these. She was born on the 24th of October 1955 in Tenterfield, New South Wales, Australia (five hours north of Aberdeen). In 1959, when Katherine was four, Jack Roughan died and the two sons staying with him moved in with Barbara and Ken.

Katherine's father would abuse and rape Barbara multiple times a day. Then Barbara would tell Katherine and her sister the intimate details of what was going on and how much she

hated it and men. By the age of 11, Katherine was also sexually assaulted by several members of her family. When she went to her mother about it, Barbara told her to “put up with it and stop complaining.” Katherine saw many psychiatrists. They didn’t believe her claims at first until family members confirmed that this happened.

In high school, Katherine was a loner and only remembered as being a bully. She assaulted a boy at school with a weapon and was once injured by a teacher. When she wasn’t angry, however, she was a model student. At 15 she left school and a year later she got her “dream job” as cut-up offal at a local slaughterhouse. She was quickly promoted and was given her own set of butchers’ knives which she hung over her bed.

Katherine’s First Relationship: David Kellett

Katherine first met David when he started working at the slaughterhouse. He was really good friends with one of Katherine’s brothers. Before working at the slaughterhouse, he was fired for his behavior and falling asleep at his previous jobs for the railways at Coffs Harbour and Muswellbrook. His best friend was killed in front of him in a shunting accident, and he was later present when a train hit a school bus in Kempsey, killing six children, in 1968. He helped rescue the injured and remove the bodies. His heavy drinking has been attributed to these incidents. He was transferred to Muswellbrook after causing several derailments due to falling asleep while shunting.

David was a heavy drinker and would get into many fights. Instead of calming him down Katherine would back him up. They ended up getting married in 1974. At the wedding, Katherine’s mother warned David to not do anything wrong because Katherine would kill him. That night Katherine tried to strangle David because he fell asleep too soon for her.

They had a very violent marriage. One-time David got home too late and found that Katherine burned all of his clothes and shoes. When he walked in, she hit him in the back of the head with a frying pan severely fracturing his skull. David didn't press charges.

After their child was born David left Katherine for another woman. Katherine tried to kill her child a couple of times and was diagnosed with postnatal depression. She spent several days in the hospital. After signing herself out she took a knife and slashed the face of a woman demanding that she be taken to find David. Halfway to Queensland, where David lived, they stopped at a gas station. There Katherine took a boy hostage until the police came and admitted her back into a psychiatric hospital. Katherine told the nurses that she planned on killing David and his mother when she got to Queensland.

Hearing this David left his girlfriend and went back to take care of both his mother and Katherine. Katherine got another job at a different slaughterhouse. She and David had another child in 1980 and in 1984 Katherine left David and moved back in with her parents. She ended up injuring her back at work and the government gave her a Housing Commission residence in Aberdeen.

Katherine's Second Relationship: David Saunders

Katherine met David Saunders in 1986 and he soon moved in with Katherine and her daughters. Katherine became jealous of what David would do when she wasn't around and would constantly throw him out. Then she would always beg him to come back. In 1987, she cut the throat of his two-month-old puppy in front of him to show him what would happen if he ever cheated on her. Then she knocked him unconscious with a frying pan.

In 1988, Katherine had another daughter. This prompted David to buy them a house, which Katherine decorated with animal skins, skulls, horns, rusty animal traps, leather jackets, old boots, machetes, rakes, and pitchforks. She left no space uncovered.

After she and David got into a fight Katherine hit him in the face with an iron and stabbed him in the stomach with a pair of scissors. She then cut up all his clothes. David went into hiding for several months, when he returned to see his daughter, he found that Katherine told the police that she was afraid that David would hurt her. They issued an Apprehended Violence Order against him.

Katherine's Third Relationship: John Chillingworth

In 1990, Katherine got pregnant by John Chillingworth, a former co-worker at the slaughterhouse Katherine worked at in Aberdeen. She gave birth to a baby boy. Their relationship ended after three years when Katherine left John for a man, she was having an affair with named John Price.

Katherine's Fourth and Final Relationship: John Price

John knew all about Katherine's violent reputation and still let her move in with him and his two children in 1995. His children really liked Katherine. Even though John and Katherine fought a lot, the first few years were great. In 1998 John and Katherine fought over his refusal to marry her, so she videotaped things he had stolen from his job and sent the video to his boss. John was fired from his job and that day kicked Katherine out. A few months later John restarted the relationship but wouldn't let Katherine move in with him. They fought even more than the first time, but they stayed together.

In February 2000, John kicked Katherine out of his house. He had gotten fed up with the constant assault and Katherine stabbing him was the last straw. On the 29th of February John

filed a restraining order to keep Katherine away from him and his kids. He even told co-workers that if he didn't come to work Katherine had killed him. They tried to get him to not go home but he didn't listen for fear that Katherine would kill his children. He got home to find that Katherine had broken in and sent the kids to sleep-over at a friend's house and he spent the evening at the neighbors. He went back home to sleep at 11 p.m.

John didn't show up for work the next day, so his boss sent a worker to go wake him up. When he found blood on the door, he called the police. The police arrived to find John's body and Katherine in a comatose state from taking a lot of pills.

Katherine had stabbed John while he slept. He woke up and tried to get away, but she chased him around the house until he eventually bled out. His autopsy revealed he had been stabbed at least 37 times. Hours after he died, Katherine skinned and decapitated him. She began cooking parts of his body. She then set up plates for each of John's children using the meat. John's head was found in a stockpot with vegetables cooking on the stove. His skin was hung from one of the door frames in the house.

The Trial

Katherine entered a plea of not guilty and the day after the jury was chosen, she changed it to guilty. The whole jury had to be dismissed because of this. Katherine had to have a psychiatric assessment to determine if she understood the consequences and was fit to make a guilty plea. Most psychiatrists said she had amnesia and dissociation but was sane. Two concluded that she had borderline personality disorder.

During the hearing when the skinning and decapitation were described Katherine became hysterical and had to be sedated. On November 8th, Justice O'Keefe pointed out that because of the nature of the crime and Katherine's lack of remorse required a severe penalty. Katherine was

sentenced to life imprisonment with no chance of parole. This was the first time an Australian woman received this sentence in history. In June 2006 Katherine tried to appeal the life sentence but it was denied. She is still imprisoned in the Silverwater Women's Correctional Centre in New South Wales to this day.



A picture of Katherine and John Price taken during their relationship in the 1990s.