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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Mario does not appear to be suffering from major psychiatric disease. He is angry and there likely is underlying depression in reaction to the very difficult situation he finds himself in. Further psychopathology was not identified, but unfortunately cannot be ruled out either because Mario's approach to the MMPI was defensive and rendered his results invalid.

I am troubled by the children's statements that the paternal grandparents hit them and speak bad about their mother and their mother's baby. Mario is in a process of integrating his children back into his life. He does not need, and the children do not need, interference from the grandparents. If and when the children's relationships with Mario and his partner are resolved and progressing well, then it may be time to bring the grandparent's in, if they can keep their hands to themselves and refrain from commenting on the children's mother and the mother's family. For now, let's not complicate matters further than they need be.

I am troubled that both Mario and his ex-wife are making accusations in the present about domestic violence that purportedly occurred when they lived together, years ago, and in another country. For their children's sake, they need to put this behind them. Divorce is supposed to be the end of a relationship, but it seems that for Mario and Karen, the emotional relationship is still intense, the difference being that the valence of the emotion has changed from love to anger.

I cannot say whether or not Mario has been hitting his son. I see in the CPT report where the boy is reported to have said this has been happening. The court will weigh that as it sees fit. But I will not adopt that information at this point and accept it as substantiated fact. I would want to speak to the children myself before venturing an opinion on this matter.

Frankly, Mario and his ex-wife Karen are in a horrible child custody battle. It is no revelation to say that these kinds of battles bring out the worst in people. The war of the Roses is raging between Mario and Karen, and their children are the victims of the collateral damage. If the children are not going to muck through the rubble of their parent's war for the rest of their childhoods, a cease-fire will have to be called – and wanted and honored by both sides. Selfish yearnings for individual vindication by either of the parents, even by only one of them, will be sufficient to keep the children in a childhood purgatory of their parents making. It's time for the adults to start acting like adults.

Mario would probably benefit from psychotherapy to help him put what is happening in his live into perspective. He is embedded in the situation now, and he cannot see the way out from his position deep within it. An objective professional can help him. I recommend that Mario be given the liberty to choose a qualified Christian/pastoral counselor rather than a secular professional if he feels he might make better progress working with such a person.

The present evaluation is insufficient to fully answer safety and custody questions. (By saying that Mario needs a counselor I am certainly not implying that he has mental health problems and his ex-wife does not. I am in fact implying neither that Mario has mental health problems, nor

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that I know anything about his ex-wife's mental health strengths or possible weaknesses. I am recommending therapy for Mario because he is embedded in a bad situation and he needs professional help to find his way to the best decisions and actions for himself and his children. No comparison of Mario mental health functioning versus that of his ex-wife can be made on the bases of the present one-sided data.

There are a lot of cross accusations on the table that serve more to cloud issues than to inform them. Further information could be derived from psychological evaluations of the mother, the stepmother, and of the two children. With the rest of these pieces of psychological data in place, a more comprehensive formulation of the case and recommendation for future directions could be offered.

I, Michael J. DiTomasso, Ph.D., hereby certify that I personally conducted this evaluation and prepared this report, and that all conclusions herein are my own and not those of any third party. I further certify that the preparation of this evaluation was performed consistent with Chapter 490, Florida Statutes, as well as with rules and regulations promulgated pursuant thereto.

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