

## CHANGING LIVES

By Josh, Wayne, Skye, Owen, Nikita, Katie and Courtney

Elizabeth and Joseph had known each other from school, but it wasn't till after they had both left that they fell in love. It all happened so suddenly, married and having their first kid, William, by the time Elizabeth was 20. Elizabeth, who had recently turned 36, was a small woman, with dark hair and coloured streaks. She worked as a care worker and absolutely loved her job even though it was very stressful. Joseph, now 38 was Elizabeth's perfect man. Tall, dark, handsome and worked as a mechanic. The pair were madly in love.



The couple had three children - William, the eldest, who was 16, was in his final year at school and was a very intelligent boy, always attending school and getting his work in on time. He was also a very popular boy and had many friends. The middle child, Mike, aged 10, was also well behaved in school, captain of the sports team, all the teachers loved him. Then there was Rosie, the only girl of the family aged 6. She was a real girly girl, loved the colour pink, dancing, princesses, the lot! However, she was a big attention seeker, and got annoyed if she wasn't the centre of attention.

Mum and Dad both had to start working overtime as they always seemed to be low on money. Both of them were beginning to get on each others nerves, the lack of sleep and all the stress was building up on them. But they tried to keep a happy face on for their children, they didn't want them knowing that problems were occurring.

"Where has all our money gone out of our savings account?" Elizabeth asked Joseph. "That was for the kids when they go to University".

Joseph just looked awkwardly "I don't know" he said with a worried tone.

Elizabeth was starting to get a bit suspicious, the only thing she spent her money on was the kids, yet loads had gone missing from their account.

She left things for a while, thinking over in her head what she had spent the money on. She didn't want to go accusing Joseph of things he hadn't done, so she had to make sure she was certain.

She and Joseph did not speak for a few days, the tension was building up between them and the house just didn't seem the same anymore.

One day Elizabeth saw Joseph scurry past the kitchen and up the stairs, she thought it was very peculiar so she decided to follow him. As she got up there she noticed that he was hiding a big box in their boiler cupboard. She decided to confront him.

"Joseph what's that you got there?"

"Oh nothing, just something a friend wants me to look after"

Elizabeth pushed past him and seen that what he had been hiding was an Xbox.

"Please don't tell me you have been spending our money on this stupid thing" she said angrily.

Then a whole argument blew up. Joseph tried to defend himself saying that he deserved it after all his hard work and for putting up with Elizabeth.

"And look at the state of you" continued Elizabeth "you've obviously been drinking! You don't care for your family at all"

Joseph looked at her, trying to get sympathy. "You know what Elizabeth; I don't know if I can handle living here, I may see if I can find somewhere else to live"

"Too late" screamed Elizabeth "I've had enough of you. I'm leaving!"

And with that Elizabeth went into her bedroom, got some of her things and slammed the front door.

Whilst the argument was happening, Rosie was downstairs, perched behind the front room door, listening to her mum and dad scream at each other. She couldn't contain her tears; she was crying so much but didn't want to let her Mum and Dad know that she heard them and that she was upset. William and Mike walked in whilst the argument was happening, they saw Rosie and ran straight over to her.

"What's up Rosie, are you okay?" William said, trying to cuddle her.

"Mummy and Daddy are fighting" she replied in a stutter.

"Come on Rosie, you don't want to stay here, we will take you to the park and get you an ice cream, yes?" Mike said

So they got her coat on and wrote a note for their mum and dad telling them they had taken Rosie out.

They all just thought that by the time they got back, their Mum and Dad would be fine again. They always sorted things out. But when they all walked through the door they had seen no sign of Mum.

"Mum? Mum? Dad where's mum?" Rosie shouted.

Dad was just sitting watching the TV, he seemed in a bad mood. "She's gone out" he said bluntly.

The children knew something was up so they all went upstairs to bed, leaving Dad alone.

It was 7 am. The children were just getting up for school. Dad called them into the front room. He said he needed to talk to them.

"Sit down all of you. I have something important to tell you." Dad was looking very uneasy and strained. "You know that your Mum and I had a big row last night. Well, we have spoken today and she won't be coming back. We have decided it will be best for us to separate."

The children's faces dropped. Rosie immediately let out a cry. None of them knew it would come to this, it was so unexpected.

There was an awkward silence for a while.

"You will still get to see her sometimes, just we won't be all together" dad continued.

Mike butted in "It won't be the same, why can't we live with her?"



"Will we have to move?" William queried. The children had so many questions they wanted to ask but Dad didn't seem to talk about it any longer.

"We will speak about it properly when you all get home. Come on now get ready for school."

The school day just didn't seem the same for any of the children.

Rosie, 'little miss popular', didn't want to do any work. She stared blankly into thin air. When the teacher left the classroom she decided to misbehave. She wanted to get into trouble so her Mummy could pick her up and take her home. She would do anything to get to see her.

Meanwhile Mike, who had A\* work, could not concentrate or focus during his lessons. The teacher shouted at him loads of times.

"Mike, this is the third time now, will you get on with your work."

But Mike was in a world of his own, just sat on his chair scribbling on his arm.

The teacher walked over to his desk to look at what he was doing. He drew a picture of a family on his arm then was scribbling it out.

"Excuse me Mike; I don't not think that is acceptable, go to the head teachers' office now."

After staying in the head teacher's office for a while discussing his problem, the head teacher became very unsympathetic towards Mike and suspended him. This frustrated him even more, he stormed out, taking out his Mum's necklace that is in his pocket to remind him of her. He clenched it tightly and began to let out a big cry.

William, the eldest, was also having problems in school. His work started to go downhill and because he felt as though he had to look after Mike and Rosie, he didn't have any time to do his school work. He became very behind. He didn't want to spend any time with his friends anymore, he kept his problems bottled up inside and didn't want to talk to anyone. His frustration just kept getting worse and worse.

They all started to blame themselves for their Mum and Dad splitting up.

It was a week or so later and it was the day that the children had been waiting for. They were going out with Mum. The children were quite nervous, as they hadn't seen their Mum in over a week but were still very excited. They didn't know what to expect. She was meant to pick them up at 10 o'clock but it was now 10:25 and she still hadn't turned up. They were beginning to wonder if she wasn't coming or if she had forgotten. Then the doorbell rang. Mike was pushing William, telling him to open the door to her. So William did. It was a bit awkward at first, but then all of a sudden Mike ran up and hugged Elizabeth.

"Mum, I've missed you! Why are you so late? Where are we going today?" Mike exclaimed without breathing for air.

"Well go and get your sister and I will tell you when we are in the car." Mum replied "Where's your Father?"



Joseph stayed upstairs. He didn't want to come down and see Elizabeth.

Rosie and everyone was in the car and they were ready to set off.

"So then who wants to know where I am taking you?"

"MEEEEEEEEEEEE" shouted the children.

"We are going to that new adventure park kids. Mummy's going to be spoiling you today"

"YESSSSS" they replied and off they went.

Mum dropped the children off and said goodbye. They all ran in making so much noise. "Dad, Dad, never guess where mum took us.... To an adventure park" squealed little Rosie.

Dad didn't seem too happy; he had a glum look on his face and was watching the TV. "Oh, I bet that was fun. Well I could always take you out next weekend; I know loads of fun places."

"Sorry Dad, Mummy said she's taking us out again, isn't she the best!" Rosie replied.

"Oh how nice of her. Yeah she's fab." He said very sarcastically.

The children sensed he wasn't in a good mood so decided to leave him and go to bed.

A few months on, and Mum had decided that she wanted the kids to live with her. But so did Dad. They couldn't decide who would have the children so they needed to go to court.

A social worker came round to see the children, she seemed very friendly, her name was Tracey. The children were a bit wary of her at first, why was she here? She introduced herself and explained to her why she was there.

"I've come to speak to you children, just to find out about you, and to find out who you would prefer to live with. We want to do the best we can for you all."

Straight away Rosie said her answer bluntly. "I want to live with Mummy. She's more fun and takes us good places."

"Right Rosie, that is good to know, but we have to decide who looks after you better."

William and Mike were uncertain who they wanted to live with. William did want to live with Mum, so he didn't have to look after Rosie as much, but Mike didn't want to leave his Dad.

"Dad's looked after us all this time, we can't just leave him" Mike said.

The kids could not agree on who they should live with, and the social worker explained that they did not want to split them up.

After asking many other questions such as how the children were getting on in school, the social worker left.

It was the day of the court case. The children were not allowed to be present in the court room so they had to sit impatiently at home. It seemed like they were taking all day. They were so nervous; god knows who they would have to live with.

Meanwhile, in the court room, tensions were rising. Mum and Dads solicitors took it in turn to





argue why they should get custody. It was a tough few hours and neither of them knew what the outcome would be. Once everyone had spoken, the Magistrates left the room to decide who should get the custody.

They were sitting waiting for an extra 20 minutes, negative thoughts running through their heads. They just wanted it over and done with.

The magistrates walked back in; slowly he stood up behind his chair

and began to say the outcome.

"We have decided that it is best interest for the children to live with Mr Johnstone. This is because we believe he has a more stable job to finance the children and their necessities, he will be able to spend more time with them due to his working hours and the children would not have to move house or school causing a lot less stress for them." Dads face brightened up, he was so happy and felt a sense of relief. He looked over to Elizabeth, she looked distraught, her head was down, she could not bear to look up.

"However, the children will get to see Mrs Johnstone on the weekends and we will review this case in 6 months to see how things are working out."

"Case adjourned."

Dad had met a new girlfriend, her name was Sarah. The children had met Sarah and her little 8 year old girl Kaileigh a few times and had been out with them. They did enjoy their company and really liked them, but they thought she was no where as good as their Mum. No other woman would compare to their Mum. A month or so after the children had met Sarah and Kaileigh; Joseph had some news to tell them.

There was a knock at the door. It was Sarah and Kaileigh with some bags.

The children looked at each other weirdly.

"I have something to tell you kids" Dad began " You know me and Sarah have been dating for some time now...well we have decided that it is time for her and Kaileigh to move in."

There was a very awkward silence

"But where will Kaileigh stay?!" Rosie questioned

"Well because we haven't got any spare rooms we thought she could stay with you? That would be fun wouldn't it, just like having sleepovers every night" Dad tried to make her like the idea of sharing her room

"Nope, no way, she isn't sharing my room or my stuff" Rosie stormed out.

William went out and helped Sarah bring in her stuff; he just chucked it on the floor and stormed off. He wasn't too keen on the idea and was annoyed Dad didn't tell them before. Mike showed Kaileigh to her new room and then went in to help Sarah.

"We don't have to call you mum do we?" Mike said worryingly.

"No dear of course you don't, just call me Sarah" she replied with a smile.

Dad was a bit disappointed with how the children had reacted, he wanted it go better, but he knew he just had to give them time. He decided that they would all sit down and discuss how things would work around the house and try to come to some agreement.

He really wanted things to work with Sarah, he hadn't been this happy in a long time, so the children agreed to make things work.

They knew it would be hard and it would take a lot of time and getting use to but they all deserved a happy ending.

Do breathing exercises to  
relax yourself!

Try visualisation exercises  
to get rid of stress!

THE END



Don't Suffer in Silence  
Confide in a Friend  
Speak to your Teacher  
about your  
Family break-up!