

If I have to be honest, these last five years have been some of the most onerous and demanding of my painful, unavailing, pitiful life. It started in the summer of 2016, wherein my wife, Alison, decided that she would be better off with some sleazy bloke she bonded with whilst drinking in downtown Leeds, than me, her faithful, loving husband. Her azure eyes pierced right through me, the fresh wound being torn open by her words - "It's over".

I was privy to nothing but the finest form of torture as I watched her depart, arms locked with another. I was absolutely and truthfully devastated. My internal battle with the truth lasted far longer than I'd care to admit. Many a nights spent tossing and turning, thinking over the last few years of my life; what could I have done differently, truthfully?

I do not know when the tears stopped, when the shaking stopped, when the endless drifting of my thoughts began to ease away. I was truly and utterly enamoured with her, and seeing her with such contentedness in the company of another man seemed to tear through me in ways I didn't know I could be ruined.

Many months passed before I was even close to reason. The struggle of trying to open up my once-shattered heart to the sour concept of love was never-ending and never-fought.

When I thought I was making progress, she contacted me. After almost seven months of radio silence, she left me with the most heart-breaking message of all. She was bearing my child - and she wanted custody all for herself. Her desire was to bereave me of one of my only desires in life - a family.

Two months of baggage-heavy and painful court battles did nothing to soothe the pain and anger coursing through my veins. I had never felt such strong emotions before. I wasn't aware my mind was capable of thinking such horrific thoughts - and yet, there I was, the desire to slaughter my ex-wife on the spot reinstating itself stronger than ever. I never did fully get custody.

I need not have worried.

She passed away peacefully due to complications during childbirth. The feeling of spite returned in full fire - she left me alone, to raise a family without her. The absolute worst nightmares from the depths of my mind were being realised.

I was left absolutely ruined, alone, with no-one bar myself to pick up the many scattered pieces of my heart and soul. The direction my life was yet to take was a mystery to both me and those around me.

As it happens, my daughter Chloé was exactly what I needed to turn my life around. She was an immense blessing in a tiny package, adding a layer of warmth I didn't know I needed to surround my then cold, lifeless soul. Chloé provided me with a brand-new reason to wake in the morning, to continue living, to prolong my no-longer miserable existence. I was finally

settling into a new life. I had a family - an unusual, tiny family, but a family nonetheless - and things were starting to look up.

That was round about when I met Laurel.

I met her at a coffee shop in a train station in Wakefield. I was travelling to the capital to see family, and decided to pick up an early morning coffee when I saw her. Something about her spoke to me - I couldn't resist starting a conversation with her, and I am so grateful I did. We clicked instantly. She was everything a man could want in a woman - sweet and kind, yet fierce and protective - and every second I spent with her felt like absolute bliss. She was like a fireplace in a cold chalet, a warm refuge in a snowy hamlet. She was everything I thought I needed.

We were both recovering from trauma, and decided to take it slow.

That all flew out of the window quickly. We were both happy, grown adults, capable of making our own decisions, and; we could not foresee our lives apart, so we moved in together. We had our calm wedding in the spring, a small, peaceful ceremony, inviting just our close friends and family, and quickly left on our long-awaited honeymoon to Barbados, where we revelled in the sweet, calming company of each-other. It did not feel strained and one-sided, as it did with Alison. It was mutual, and relaxed. We loved each other. We needed each other. We balanced each other. We were moving on.

It was not long before we both realised, we wanted a bigger family. It was only a year and ten months after our joyous wedding night that we brought our twins Joseph and Emma into this world. They were two little bundles of joy, and I could not have been happier.

We quickly settled into a heartbeat like rhythm together, living harmonically as a family. Despite our wounds, we were all happy and content. Everything was looking up, for the first time in our lives, and we could not wait to spend the rest of our lives together.

As usual, everything we worked for was scrapped and discarded, left to rot in due time. Our marriage was but nine years mature before we planned an exciting family skiing trip to Austria. I, in a work-related accident, injured my leg, and was unable to travel, but I did not want my children to miss out on the awaited trip they had been looking forward to so much. Joseph, who was not big on skiing, kept me company, whilst Laurel and the girls packed and dived straight into Europe.

They did not return.

They do not; they cannot.

Those who I love are never to stay.

The skiing accident left me, once again, without a partner.

Joseph remained in my care.

He was a bitter, callous reminder of the future we could have had.

I was left, once again, a single, lonely father, mourning my wives, one who I loved, one who loved back.

The anguish never truly faded.

When has life ever shown mercy, truly?