

I WAS SCREAMING INSIDE BUT NOBODY COULD HEAR ME... NOW THE WORLD LISTENS

Chapter One Childhood

I grew up into a very working class family and environment where every penny counted and poverty was rife. My father came from a working class family and so did my mother, which meant that money was tight and obviously, living on a budget and being poor can bring stresses and strains to any relationship. I grew up not seeing much of my dad as he had to provide for myself and my siblings and he spent most hours working. When we did see him he was often groggy and tired because when he was not in work he was in bed and this was his life as a married man with children.

My mother was a stay at home mum bringing us up as my dad worked very long hours and we would often just all sit together on the couch with a blanket over us watching the television.

My mother suffered with her nerves and she had agoraphobia so we would mostly find things to do indoors rather than outdoors and we became used to watching films and finding things to do to while away the time.

Looking back, I guess I could have picked up on my mother's nerves and anxieties as children do because when we would visit the park in the summer which was very infrequent, I would look up at my mother and watch her face fill with anxiety at seeing all the crowds and she would say out loud, 'Oh, I don't think I can go in between that lot, kids!' We would beg my mother to stay and she would do her very best to overcome her anxieties of crowds and we would stay for a while.

Sometimes my dad would have holidays and days off and he would then take us out to the park and give my mother a break as he knew that she found it very difficult to be amongst crowds.

I had a very close childhood friend and we both had lots in common, with me going to his house and him spending time in my house and we got on really well. We did not bother much with the other kids in the neighbourhood as we found solace in each other and for us, two was company enough. We would spend hours roaming around in the street and creating stuff to do like playing with our figures or building dens and sometimes wrecking dens that other boys had made.

My friend was a lot more confident than I was at wrecking dens and I would say, 'Should we be doing this?' to which he would reply, 'Let's tear this place apart; we can have some of the stuff for our den,' and then he would start kicking stuff down and snapping wood. Then I would join in, very hesitantly. I was always cautious.

We would go out on our bikes and he would be way ahead of me and I would stop and say,

‘Let’s go back, we are going too far.’ He would look behind and come back and ask what was wrong and I would say, ‘We must turn back.’ He would try and get me to go a little further as he swore he knew where he was going but I was far too fearful of getting lost and he would very often go on without me and then call for me later.

I enjoyed being in the house rather than outdoors. I felt more comfortable in the house watching films rather than building dens and riding our bikes. This might have been because I spent a lot of time indoors while growing up, but that was where I was most comfortable.

My parents were not happy in their marriage and I guess I picked up on this, too. My mother was in love with another man and my dad was struggling to keep the marriage together. He knew there were problems and issues and he knew what or who the problem was but he did his best to mask the problem and try and work around it as my mother was also doing her best to make the marriage work but it was inevitable that it would soon end in divorce.

My mother was already having anxiety issues and being in an unhappy marriage was just making her life more claustrophobic and there was obviously tension in the air as my dad did not want the divorce, but my mother was adamant as she needed to break away and find a new way of life.

After my parents discussed the separation there was no other option but for my dad to leave and let the divorce take place. After all, it was no life for him being in an unhappy marriage and working around the clock and it was no life for my mother to be in love with somebody else and living a life of pretence.

My dad left and it was a very unhappy day in our house with my siblings crying and the atmosphere being very emotional and tense. My mother was packing up my dad’s things and putting them into a suitcase and I was watching all this going on from afar.

Thinking back to how it was then, I did not see much of my dad as I have explained and when I did see him, he would come across as an authority figure because I could easily cheek my mother and be naughty, but Dad would not put up with this from any of his kids, so writing this autobiographically, I can say I did feel sad at him going but also a little relieved because there was no authority figure in my house any more – just my mother who I was not afraid to play up.

Looking back on my childhood now, I think maybe I played up to get some attention – that’s what it could have been, attention seeking, after all. Maybe I played my dad up to get attention when I did see him and maybe I played my mother up to also get attention from her because she had my other siblings to deal with and her own inner demons. It all kind of makes sense now many years on...

Life went on without my dad and we got used to seeing him once a week. Every Sunday he would take us to his parents’ house – my paternal grandmother’s. It was strange at first, my father collecting us and dropping us off but kids adapt, I guess, and we did.

Inevitably, my mother moved on with her life which was her reason for getting a divorce from my dad and she met up with the man she was in love with and had always been in love

with and they met up through mutual friends. He heard that my mother was divorced and was a free agent and it got back to my mother that he, too, was a free agent so they began a relationship.

My dad was still feeling the effects of rejection and I guess he was doing his best to carry on with life and very slowly getting back into the game of dating again. His confidence and self-worth had taken a massive blow so it was kind of hard for him to trust women again but he got back into the swing of things. The trouble was, my dad was then at the age where most of the women he dated would come with baggage as they would have children, too, but there again, my dad also came with baggage.

We would see more and more of my mother's boyfriend as his visits became more and more regular and he would always bring with him a bag of chocolate which we would fight over. I think the majority of kids can be won over with sweets and chocolate. He had no baggage himself so he had to date my mother who did have baggage. I think it is hard for any man, with or without baggage, to take on other people's kids.

We were not the best behaved, but then what kids are? I mean we were spoilt and we had whatever we wanted, especially around Christmas times when the room would be flooded with presents but we were just kids adapting to a new way of life with a new man in our lives who would not replace our dad but would step into his shoes, so to speak.

I got on very well with my mother's partner and it was good to have laughter in the air again after so many gloomy months after my dad had left. We were all coming around to this new way of life and adapting to it. My mother was much happier in herself and there was not so much tension in the air as she must have been fretting for a long time as to how she was going to tell my dad that she wanted a divorce.

Months went by and everything was fine and we saw my dad from time to time. He was starting to enjoy himself again and get back into the swing of life and he was not feeling so rejected any more and little by little he was regaining his self-esteem as a person.

Out of the blue, my mother became pregnant and it was a huge shock, both to my mother and her partner and to us kids and we had to get used to seeing her with a huge belly and a bad back to boot. I think her partner was feeling the strain of helping to raise somebody else's kids as well as preparing for fatherhood himself; a hard task for any man. Looking back now, his life had turned full circle.

We moved house and I lost my childhood friend. We have never spoken since but it was no real big deal for me as I didn't feel I ever really needed any friends and in any case we all moved on and made new friends. I guess it's just the way it happens.

The baby was born and I, along with my siblings, settled into a new school and new surroundings even though my siblings were far better at socialising than I ever was. Life at home was becoming strained because there was now a screaming baby in the house and we were no angels, either. My mother's partner was now in a place where he knew everybody and all the people he knew liked their drink and so did he, but his life had changed; he now had responsibilities but he was finding it difficult to cope with his own baby, us kids and a nagging girlfriend – my mother – who told him time and time again that he had

responsibilities now and that his binge drinking days were over.

There were heated arguments; a baby crying in the corner, we kids shouting at each other and my mother telling him the baby's nappy needed changing while she cooked the tea. To make a very long story very short, he left my mother as it was all too much for him to bear and he was not seeing his mates any more and drinking them under the table. His life had become domesticated and he did not want that; he wanted to be a free agent.

My mother was devastated and traumatised as she thought she had him under the thumb, that she had domesticated him and he would never run away from his responsibilities. She was very mistaken.

During the time he was with us before he left my mother and his baby, my sibling, he was extremely short tempered with us kids and I cannot put into words what went on during that time because it would not be fair to talk about that after all these years but let's just say it was traumatic and, I believe, a huge factor in my becoming so timid and hating alcohol.

After many, many months of him leaving, I helped and supported my mother to look after the baby and my other siblings as it was all too much for her and she was still hurting after his departure. Mum was in her own little world for a long time and she could not comprehend or believe that he could just up and go like that.

I loved being an authority figure for a while and taking care of things but I grew into an adult before my time and I was very mature for my age... not in a growing up sense but in the way I spoke about things – more like an old person would. I did not bother with boys my own age so I never knew about the latest gadgets or technology or smoked or did drugs or drank alcohol. I stayed away from all of that and I had no peer pressure. I was a father figure without being a dad at a very young age and when boys my age were having sex and messing about, I was shampooing the carpets or making the beds and dusting. I therefore had no quality of life or life experience, so to speak, in the real world. It would later come back and bite me on the ass.

My mother took back my sibling's dad after his many attempts to talk her round to it and practically begging my mother on his knees to come back into our lives. My mother loved this man with all her heart and even though he had hurt her beyond measure by leaving, she gave it one more shot.

Things were fine for a while. I took a back seat and he fulfilled his role as father figure and step-dad but deep down he still did not want to be with us as this was not his life and even though I believe he tried his best, he loved freedom too much to live a domesticated life.

We were just not getting along and for months and months he would be in one room and I in another and communication between us was reduced to insults and swear words and if not that, then silence. We went from good mates to arch enemies and the tension in the atmosphere was mounting.

We were not seeing much of my dad around this time as he was a free agent and enjoying his life back on the dating scene and basically having a ball and getting his mojo back. I guess I was very bitter about my dad leaving such huge time gaps between seeing us and so were my

siblings as life at home was not the best by any means.

Then, as everything in life does, it came to a head. My mother's partner got drunk and came home and there was a release of all the tension that had been going on over this long period as he forgot his restraint and let loose and physically attacked me. He grabbed me by my throat and squeezed and as I was thumping him back in both anger and self-defence, he throttled me against the wall even harder before dropping me to the floor where I lay in a heap. I desperately wanted to get back up, pounce on him and finish what he'd started but I was only thirteen years of age and he was much bigger and stronger than I was.

Once again he left but this time it was final. There was no coming back for him as he was where he wanted to be... in the pub with his friends, clutching a pint. We have never spoken since and never will again.

Life at home was miserable once more and remained so for a long time and it was tough being in control of my siblings again while Mum went out to work to pay the mortgage. But I was not well; I was having problems on the inside and the outside, physically and psychologically and if you look at Maslow's chart of Psychology at what a human being needs to fulfil their lives to the best, then it was almost inevitable that I would go on to have major problems later in life as my needs were just to drink and feed myself and that's as far as it went.