

## The Almost Story.

I was married, had two children, and was living in California. A year earlier, while working as a carpenter, I ruptured a disc in my lower back.

My wife's sister's young son in Australia died in a swimming pool accident.

My wife took our children to visit her during her grief.

Instead of returning, she moved to England, her home country, with financial aid from her father.

Three months later, I moved to England to see my children and regain custody.

My wife was having an affair.

Six months later, we decided to "try again". I returned with my daughter while my wife ended her affair and returned two months later.

Things were never right again, and about 6 weeks after she returned, as she was leaving for work one evening, she told me she had been seeing a guy, and while they hadn't slept together, they would that night. With that said, she left. I spent the night sitting in my chair, and she returned the next morning. I will never forget the smell of her having been with another man. She asked me what I wanted her to do, and I replied that I wanted her to leave. She asked me what I wanted her to do, and I replied, "Pack your bags". "How much time do I have?" she replied, and I answered that she had as much time as it takes to pack her bags. She packed her bags and left her children and me.

My wife claimed her actions stemmed from her unhappiness. I was also unhappy, yet I didn't have an affair, nor did I ever leave my children.

Time rolled along. Her boyfriends came and went; child custody battles became the norm, and the children and I did well. My back healed, I got a good-paying job teaching English and Math at the local Junior College, and I finally had enough money to make a down payment on a house, which we moved into.

I believe I was a strict parent, but we also had a lot of fun together: boat camping, friends galore, barbeques, and school functions.

By now, 8 years had passed, and I remarried. The children's mother told them that because I had remarried, she wasn't needed anymore and that she was returning to England. The children were devastated, but my daughter, the eldest child and now a teenager, openly hated my new wife because she believed she was the reason her mother left.

Epic, nonstop, emotionally charged arguments ensued, and my once-peaceful home became a battleground. Therapy didn't help; talking, silence and shouting didn't help. Neither did alcohol or working long hours help. I was trapped in a situation I couldn't fix.

Then one day, while driving my boat back to the dock with a load of Dungeness crabs and some salmon, my cell phone rang. It was my now sixteen-year-old daughter telling me she had run away to be with her mother in England. I listened, and after she told me she no longer had a father, she hung up.

While the news was emotionally devastating to everyone in the family, my son was the most affected. He had lost the two most important females in his life. It was as if he lost the meaning of his life. He became distant, failed at school, and lacked interest in most things until he got into drugs and alcohol- those he had great interest in.

My son lived at home until he was eighteen, and then he too wanted to be with his mother, so he left for England. I paid for his plane ticket and gave him some cash.

His sister had already learned her mother didn't want the responsibility that being a mother required, and, unfortunately, my son would quickly learn that too.

He too called me names and ignored my love and caring. No one ever asked how I was doing because no one cared.

My children got into situations they couldn't handle, and then they would reach out to me for help, which I always gave.

I paid for flights home, apartments, and cars, and paid their way. I did it all because I was their father and they needed me. I hoped they would learn I was not the bad guy and had never been that guy.

But no matter how much I gave, it never counted in my favor. Their resentment never faltered.

I finally stopped giving because it seemed like I was enabling them to fail by protecting them from experiencing failure. When they needed anything, they reached out to me, and I fixed things for them.

When I decided to stop giving, they stopped talking to me.

Five years went by, and my son phoned me, needing my help. I told him he could come and stay. For nineteen months, minus two months he spent visiting his sister, he stayed in the guest unit. He worked for maybe half that time, and for the rest I supported him again by enabling him. I bought him a truck so he had transportation. My goal was to enable him to succeed.

Then one evening, he was watching MMA on television, screaming and swearing. He was so loud that I walked over and asked him to keep it down. My son went berserk, and after his tantrum, doors and windows were broken, causing significant and costly damage. My son left

that night to be with his sister, and he still hasn't spoken to me. His home hadn't been cleaned and was disgusting. It took four days to clean, and the windows are open to air it out. He was an addict who succumbed to the lie they think alcohol and marijuana provide.

He left, breaking every word of love and loyalty he had professed. He went to his sister, and I am forever grateful she was available. She and I have spoken a few times now, which is good.

My daughter told me several years ago that she ran away because I intimidated her. My side of that story is that she was making life in our home awful for everyone, yet none of us left her. We meant it when we said we all cared about her and looked after her. She ate food every day, her car was paid for, and she received money for all her needs. The intimidation she says she experienced was when she tried to be the boss of our home, but no one listened to her rules. I was there; no one threatened her, and if I made her fearful, it was because I couldn't let an immature teenager control how the house was run.

All that remains is the unhealed damage. My experience with how to live life is irrelevant to them. I'm still the person they blame, despite all the good I have done and never having left them. I've always answered their phone calls and been there when they needed help.

The past is behind us, and the future is yet to come. As I sit here in the present, I smile because life is good.

Written by Peter Skeels © 8-20-2026