

# The Girl Speaks



“Still Their Dad: Holding On Through the Silence”

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A quiet guide for fathers navigating social services, separation, and survival.

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**“They looked at the paperwork. Not the man  
who showed up anyway.”**

*This guide is for the dads they didn't expect to stay.  
The ones who were pushed aside, misjudged, or left out  
of the conversation —  
but kept showing up anyway.*

*You might not see yourself in the parenting leaflets or  
hear your voice in the courtrooms.  
But that doesn't mean your presence doesn't matter.*

*Whether you're a father by birth, by bond, or by love  
that refuses to give up —  
you deserve to be seen in this story.*

*This isn't a how-to. It's a holding space.*

*For the grief no one asks about.*

*For the anger that feels like failure.*

*For the hope that won't go away, even when the system  
tries to bury it.*

*You are still his dad.*

*You are still her dad.*

*And that still matters.*

# Section One: What No One Told You About Being a Dad in the System

*They tell you to be involved.*

*To step up.*

*To prove yourself.*

*But what they don't tell you is how hard it will be to be  
seen once you do.*

*That your love might be questioned more than your  
absence.*

*That your quiet grief will be mistaken for coldness.*

*That showing emotion might make you look*

*“unstable,”*

*but holding it in will make you seem “disengaged.”*

*No one tells you how fatherhood becomes a performance*

*under the system's gaze.*

*Or how hard it is to keep showing up when the decisions are made behind closed doors you're barely allowed to enter.*

*You are expected to fight for your place — but told not to raise your voice.*

*You're expected to stay calm — even when your child is hurting and you've been stripped of the right to protect them.*

*You're asked to trust a system that doesn't trust you.*

***And still — you're here.***

***Reading this.***

***Trying.***

***Caring.***

***Holding on.***

***That matters more than they'll ever write in their reports.***

## **Section Two: Showing Up When You're Shut Out**

*There will be days when you feel like a stranger to your  
own child.*

*Not because you left — but because the system pushed  
you to the edge of their life  
and called it protection.*

*You might be allowed letters.*

*Or supervised visits.*

*Or nothing at all.*

*And in those quiet, brutal spaces, you're told to be  
patient.*

*To “focus on yourself.”*

*To wait until someone else decides you're safe enough,  
stable enough, good enough.*

*But what they don't see is that you never stopped  
being their dad.*

*Even from a distance.*

*Even when you're called by your first name instead of  
“Dad.”*

*Even when you're holding your breath in courtrooms,  
not knowing if you'll see them again this month — or  
this year.*

*🌿 So how do you show up when you're shut out?  
You do what you can, with what you're given:*

- You write, even if they may not read it yet.*
- You keep their birthdays in your calendar, even if you don't get to celebrate.*
- You show up to meetings, even if no one greets you.*
- You speak their name out loud. You talk to the space they used to fill.*
- You protect their story — even when you're not allowed to protect them.*

*It might not look like parenting.*

*But it is.*

*It's the quiet kind — the kind no one claps for, but that keeps love alive anyway.*

## *Small Ways to Stay Present*

- *Keep a journal of letters you'd say to them if you could.*
- *Make a box of things you'd want them to know one day: photos, memories, prayers.*
- *Keep track of your efforts — not for them, not for court — but for you.*
- *Say their name. Speak your love. Refuse to forget who you are, even when they try to*

***Because one day, when someone asks,  
“Did you give up?”  
You'll be able to say —  
“No. I just wasn't allowed in. But I never left.”***

# ✧ **Understanding the Terms They Throw at You**

*Because you shouldn't need a law degree to understand your own child's case.*

*When you're pulled into the system, you're suddenly surrounded by professionals speaking in codes.*

*It's easy to feel like you're on the outside of a conversation about your own child.*

*This section breaks down the most common terms in clear, father-friendly language — no jargon, no shame.*


## **Parental Responsibility (PR)**

*This means the legal right to make decisions for your child — like medical care, school, or religion.*

*If you're named on the birth certificate (after 2003 in the UK), you usually have PR automatically.*

*But having PR doesn't always mean you're treated equally.*

*It's your right — but sometimes you have to remind people you have it.*

 **You can say:**

*“I have parental responsibility — I would like to be included in all major decisions regarding my child.”*

## Section 20

*This is when you agree (in writing) to let your child go into care voluntarily.*

*You still have rights. You can withdraw consent at any time — though social services might challenge it.*

*Many dads sign because they feel pressured or afraid, without being told what it really means.*

 *You can ask:*

*“Can I have a written copy of what I’m agreeing to?”*

*“What happens if I change my mind about Section 20?”*

**“You don’t have to sound like them to be heard.**

**You just have to speak your truth with calm strength.”**


## *Child Protection Conference*

*This is a formal meeting where professionals decide if your child is at risk of harm and whether a Child Protection Plan is needed.*

*You might feel like decisions are already made – and often, it can feel that way – but you still have a right to speak, share your views, and ask questions.*

*You might be the only one in the room who's there because you love your child, not because it's your job.*

*That doesn't make your voice less valid – it makes it more.*

 *You can say:*

*“I'd like my views to be recorded clearly in the minutes.”*

*“Can I have a copy of the report ahead of time to prepare?”*

*“I'd appreciate space to speak before decisions are made.”*

# Reflection Space: For the Dad Still Holding On

*You don't have to write a lot.*

*You don't have to explain it perfectly.*

*This space is yours — to name what hurts, what's  
missing, or what still matters.*

*Take a breath.*

*Say what you need to say.*

*Even if no one else ever reads it.*

What would I say  
to my child right now,  
if I could?

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What have I held onto,  
even when the system  
tried to take it?

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# **You're Allowed to Grieve**

*Fathers are often expected to be strong. Silent. Steady. But when the system rips your children from your life, that grief doesn't just go away — it settles in your bones. It lingers in empty rooms and unanswered messages.*

*And still, you're expected to carry on.*

*You don't have to hide that hurt here.*

*This is your space to say:*

*This mattered.*

*This broke me.*

*And I am still here.*

*What Grief Looks Like When You're a Dad:*

- Missing the sound of their laughter*
- Wondering what they've been told about you*
  - Being seen as a danger, not a dad*
- Holding your anger because you're scared it'll be used against you*
- Carrying birthdays, memories, and milestones alone*
  - Trying to fight for them without falling apart*

# What I Lost When They Took My Child

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The Things  
I Never Got to Say

# **A Note Before You Write**

*Writing emails in the middle of emotional chaos can feel impossible.*

*Sometimes the words don't come. Sometimes the fear of saying the wrong thing is louder than your love.*

*This section is here to help.*

*You'll find simple, respectful templates — not because you need help caring, but because you deserve support in being heard.*

*Whether you're writing to a professional, a solicitor, or even your own child, these words are offered as a starting point — a quiet way to speak your truth when your voice feels tired.*

*Feel free to copy them exactly, adjust them slightly, or simply use them as a guide.*

*There's no perfect way to say what you need to say — only your way.*

*What matters is that you try.*

*That you keep speaking.*

*That you don't let the silence win.*

*You're not alone in this.*

# Email Template

## 1. Email to a Social Worker — Requesting Fair Contact

*Dear [Social Worker's Name],*

*I hope you are well. I'm writing to ask whether we can review the current contact arrangements between myself and [child's name].*

*I want to be part of my child's life in a way that supports their wellbeing and maintains a sense of connection and security. The current contact feels limited, and I'm concerned that it may not be enough to maintain a healthy bond.*

*I understand there are concerns, but I would really appreciate the opportunity to work together toward a plan that allows more consistent, meaningful contact — even if it begins gradually.*

*Please let me know if this is something we can discuss. I'm willing to engage openly and respectfully in any way that supports my child's best interests.*

*Kind regards,  
[Your Full Name]  
[Your Contact Information]*

# Email Template

## 2. Email to Your Child – If You're Allowed to Write

*Subject: Just a Note From Dad*

*Hi [Child's Name],*

*I don't know if this letter will reach you, but if it does, I hope you know how much I think about you. I carry you in my heart every day.*

*Life has been confusing lately, and I know things might feel uncertain – maybe even scary. I want you to know that none of this is your fault. You're not to blame for any of it.*

*I'm still your dad. I still love you. I always will.*

*I'm doing everything I can to make things better. I hope one day we can talk, laugh, and just be together again – even in small ways. Until then, I'll keep hoping, keep loving you, and keep believing in us.*

*Love always,*

*Dad*

# Email Template

## 3. Email to a Solicitor — Request for Clearer Communication

*Subject: Request for Updates and Support*

*Dear [Solicitor's Name],*

*I wanted to reach out to check on any updates regarding my case. I know things can take time, but I often feel left in the dark and unsure of what's happening behind the scenes.*

*I'd appreciate a short update, even if there isn't much to report. It helps me stay grounded and informed.*

*I also wanted to ask — if there's anything more I can be doing to support the process or make my voice heard in a way that's constructive, please let me know.*

*Thank you for your continued support.*

*Kind regards,*

*[Your Full Name]*

*[Case Reference, if applicable]*

# Email Template

## 4. Email to a Professional — When You've Been Misunderstood

*Subject: Clarifying My Intentions*

*Dear [Professional's Name],*

*I wanted to write to share something that's been weighing on me. I've felt that my intentions as a parent may not be fully understood, and I'd like to offer a little clarity.*

*I know the situation is complex, and I understand that your role involves caution and assessment. Still, I hope you can see that I am trying my best under difficult circumstances. I'm not perfect, but I care deeply and want to do what's right for my child.*

*If there's anything I've said or done that raised concern, I'm open to reflection and discussion. I just ask that my efforts, love, and intentions not be dismissed.*

*Thank you for your time and understanding.*

*Warm regards,  
[Your Full Name]*

## ✧ **Still Their Dad**

*A quiet ending — but never the end of your story.*

*You might not be the one they listen to.*

*You might not be the one they believe.*

*But you are still the one who never stopped showing up in  
the ways you could.*

*Whether they know it now or one day later  
your child will have a record of who you were:*

*a father who fought with love,*

*who stayed soft when the world tried to harden him,  
and who spoke his truth even when no one clapped for it.*

*You don't need permission to care.*

*You don't need approval to grieve.*

*You don't need proof to keep loving them.*

*You're still their dad.*

*And that still means everything.*

