

Daily Mail Online Monday, 6 February 2010:

I gave my wife everything - she's left me with nothing:

By [Bel Mooney](#)

Dear Bel,

When I met my wife, both she and I were divorced, and I took her and her five-month-old baby boy into my home. We married four years later. My job (though incredibly stressful and which necessitated me commuting from North to South on a weekly basis) brought an affluent lifestyle. My wife was a housewife, her little boy called me Dad - and I loved him as if he were my own.

But, eventually, my workload made me tired and withdrawn, while she enjoyed a circle of new friends and slowly built a life without me. Sometimes I felt like a stranger in my own home.



After eight years together, including four years of marriage, I decided that I could not go on travelling up and down the motorway, living out of suitcase during the week. So I asked my wife to move nearer to my work, thereby reducing my travelling. I felt that I needed to spend more time with her and our son, but she wouldn't entertain it - and within weeks had engaged a very expensive solicitor (whom I was to pay for) who wrote to me (at my hotel) asking for a divorce.

When we got together, she had nothing. I helped sort out her credit card debt and her ex gave her just £50 a month as a token gesture. She had always said that we didn't need a prenuptial agreement because she had too much respect for me to consider taking me to the cleaners if we split - and in any case, she

assured me she loved me so much that this would never happen. How stupid I was to believe her.

I ended up having to give my house (worth £360,000) to her, on the basis that her son was a 'child of the family'. The other option was to pay ongoing maintenance for the next ten years as well as a substantial lump sum.

So, after only four years of marriage, she got 85 per cent of my net worth. I ended up losing the house and nearly all my savings by the time I'd paid off the outstanding mortgage. I also lost about £15,000 in legal fees and bills, and had to move into rented accommodation, while she has my four-bedroom house in a lovely area.

And just to rub salt into the wound, I've tried to keep in touch with the little boy I treated as my son but never hear back from him. She sent an email saying he never talks about me, doesn't miss me and she doesn't want him to have anything to do with me; she's met a new man and tells me not to contact her or the little boy again.

How, in a civilised society, is it possible for this to happen? I've tried to be balanced, but it is very difficult when I've been financially wiped out by a greedy and callous lady. I know nothing can change my situation but somehow I find it helps to share the pain of my story.

Having gone from having everything to nothing in the space of 12 months, I have learnt not to trust love - because it lies. Please warn other men.

Mike

Your story is a very sad one, and many male readers will sympathise with you. But so will many women. An awareness of injustice has nothing to do with gender, and few people would think it right for a woman to effectively 'steal' a man's home.

In your longer letter, you make the point that the law 'in the case of divorcing couples is heavily weighted in favour of the female' and, statistically, you're right. I guess the current situation redresses the balance of centuries when the marriage laws penalised women, but that doesn't make it right - and anyway, this is not the place for any sort of legal wrangle.

I agree with you wholeheartedly when you complain about lawyers being too keen on making money and sometimes behaving 'like sharks'.

I remember it well: you make a five-minute phone call to ask a question about your divorce proceedings, think they're being friendly when they ask how you are, then get charged the equivalent of a four-star restaurant meal. And please don't write in protest, solicitors, because you must know that lots of people feel this way!

What concerns me now, Mike, is how you deal with the situation and rebuild your life.

The brutal behaviour of your ex-wife over the child whose care you shared makes me very angry indeed. It happens again and again - and is yet another example of the appalling selfishness so many people demonstrate, in putting the welfare of their children last.

This woman was willing to use her child as a pawn to help her legal battle and gain the home - but she has not thought about what might be best for him in emotional terms.

So now the eight-year-old not only has to adjust to the disappearance of the man he called Dad, but he has to build a new relationship with her new boyfriend.

Since she's surely bound to have told him that you are not his 'real Dad' (to justify her actions), the boy will probably feel he has already been abandoned by two men already in his short life. What will be the long-term effects on his own behaviour?

It pains me to confess that I do not see what you can do - other than try to appeal to her better nature. Yes, yes, I hear you protesting that she's proved she doesn't have a better nature, but as an intelligent man you must have researched your rights and know that you can't force your way into the child's life.

But you can communicate with other men who will give you emotional support. Even though the little boy is not your biological child you were his *de facto* father, and so you might find it helpful to get in touch with one of the groups that look after men's interests, such as Families Need Fathers. At the very least you'll find it helpful to talk to kindred spirits.

It is very common for men in your situation to become bitter and to believe that all women are out for what they can get, and will plot, lie and cheat to do honest men down.

One or two men's organisations that deal with issues of divorce and custody actively promote that prejudice - but I believe that does far more harm than good to the men themselves.

It does not add to the health of a society when either sex declares ideological war on the other - and chants out wrongs as if they were prayers.

When you write that you no longer trust love 'because it lies' your - perfectly understandable - bitterness is speaking, but I ask you to see that this will contribute nothing to your long-term happiness.

I'm glad it felt better, just to have written the long email telling your story. It's obvious you feel lonely as well as bitter, and I sympathise with you one hundred per cent.

But you if you Google 'Counselling for Divorced Men' you'll find some helpful sites which might help you make sense of your feelings and move you beyond cynicism about relationships.

Please don't give up on love because love went wrong and one woman treated you badly.

You must know that there are many lovely ladies out there who would be thrilled to meet a man like you, and share things like meals and movies.

Onwards, Mike, onwards!

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1248934/BEL-MOONEY-I-gave-wife--shes-left-nothing.html#ixzz0f8N4dIFp>