

# ***“AND THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER....DIVORCE”***

***By Taryn Little***

And they all lived happily ever after”. These words have been the epilogue of many a fairy tale ending that have caused young, unassuming women including myself to believe in the ideal that all romantic stories had a happy ending. The slipper would fit Cinderella perfectly, the swallow saved Thumbelina from a potentially bad marriage, Snow white’s deathly slumber was magically awakened by a kiss from the handsome prince, while Rapunzel’s long hair allowed her knight in shining armor to save her from a life of isolation. However not all romantic stories have a “happily ever after” ending.

As a little girl I unoriginally dreamed of a house with a white picket fence, a pigeon pair, a Yorkshire terrier and a loving husband who many years later treated me the same way he did when he first met me. I never dreamed that I would marry, only to find myself divorced a few brief years later.

For the longest time I struggled to speak the word divorce. In fact I am on a vehement mission to re-coin the word and subvert its connotation of severance and dissolution. Like many in society I had ashamedly and erroneously viewed the divorced community as the perpetrators of poorly thought out marital choices, and a distinct lack of the perseverance gene. Surely “until death do us part” needed to be interpreted literally and not metaphorically. My parent’s marriage was not without challenge, yet it exuded a very tangible commitment to each other. A commitment that allowed them to “fight it out” and then sweetly reconcile their differences. My template for marriage was modelled on my parent’s unconditional love for each other. On Christmas Eve 1981 my mother and still born brother died and it was death that ultimately dissolved my parent’s marriage. My romantic mind then entered the world in search of a love that only death could sever.

I like most young women had a long list of reasons of why I would walk down the aisle someday. Mr. Right had to be smart, funny, ambitious, passionate and, and, and. Anyone who has ever gone in search of a life partner who meets every criterion of the proverbial list, knows that it is an elusive endeavor. No human being is perfect and was never meant to be. But I do believe there is an imperfectly perfect partner for each of us.

In my case I forfeited Mr. Right in order to do what I believed was biblically and societally correct. After thirty three years of managing to avoid a pregnancy outside of wedlock I joined my familial statistics of men and women who bore children outside of marriage. My decision to marry was not based on the reasons one should marry. The crass truth of what propelled me down the marital aisle was to be found in the combination of appeasing personal, societal and biblical shame. The precariousness of marrying on a foundation that is about as solid as quick sand resulted in the rapid demise of my marriage. I now joined the growing number of individuals labelled divorcees.

There are innumerable reasons which cause divorce. Pondering those reasons are not why I am choosing to write this article. Divorce and its repercussions are a reality in my life and in the lives of many. It may be likened to death. The death of an envisaged life together and the hopes and dreams that such a life would offer. For the children, the death of growing up in a home where both parents no longer reside. Whether one chooses divorce or not, there is an associated sense of brokenness that one

has to heal from. But experience has directed me towards the possibility of “living happily ever after...Divorce”. And this has been the catalyst for this article.

Fast forwarding to six years after my divorce I met a man who I believe is perfectly imperfect for me. He too is divorced and together we have attempted to integrate our post-divorce lives. He has two daughters and I have a son. Not an easy integration at first but through our concerted efforts we have managed to provide a space in which both our children and we could find a new chapter that offered us renewed hope in the ideal of “togetherness”. Their parents would never reside in the same home again and we could not erase the scars each of them lived with because of this. What we could do was make a conscious decision to create an environment that eased the pain of past memories through the creation of new wholesome memories.



Divorce brings one face to face with the past. One has to contend with the exes (wives and husbands) and the new partners that enter your space through inevitability. Celebrations and occasions which precipitate the presence of both the past and the future. We do have a choice to attend or not to attend, to engage or not engage the “exes and the new partners”. I am a human being and when one falls in-love there is an unreasonable ideal that life began when your new love met you. But this is an unrealistic self-harming belief, particularly within a post-divorce context.

After deep introspection I realized that authentic integration meant embracing the past, in ways which opened the door to amicable communication and celebratory occasions that allowed old and new partners to set aside anything that may create new scars and impede the healing of old scars. Living in harmony for the sake of self and others is a conscious choice. Choosing the latter breed's bitterness and contempt. It places unnecessary pressure on the children to choose between two parents and it robs the adults of a rare commodity called peace.

I acknowledge that each post-divorce story is different and many may cringe at the thought of embracing all that represents the past. However amicable civilized engagement needs to be the cornerstone of post –divorce scenarios. Without it we are incapable of moving forward.

It allows a young girl to celebrate her pre matric party with both her parents and her new integrated family. It is where the past meets the present and says "let's create a better future".

I have chosen to attend. I have chosen to engage when appropriate. I have chosen to live happily ever after.....Divorce!