

THE BATTLE FOR THE KIDS — FREE SAMPLE

THE BATTLE FOR THE KIDS

What to do when separation, the family court and the “system” turn your life upside down — and you’re fighting to stay in your kids’ lives, and stay alive

Eric Purvis *with* **Joe Walsh**

A companion to The Battle of Business & Battle of the Boardroom v Bedroom

“Courage is fear holding on a minute longer.” — General George S. Patton

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Although this book is a work of non-fiction, all names, business names and places have been changed. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organisations, or persons other than those who have helped write the book is entirely coincidental. This book tells one man’s story to help others going through the same thing. It is **not** legal, medical or financial advice — please get your own. In line with the *Family Law Act 1975*, no party to any court proceedings is identified.

If Joe's story lands close to home for you, please reach out: **Lifeline 13 11 14 • MensLine 1300 78 99 78 • 1800RESPECT 1800 737 732 • Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 • Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636 • Emergency 000**. Suicide is preventable. Help works. Joe is proof.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

You might remember Joe Walsh from *The Battle of Business* and *Battle of the Boardroom v Bedroom*. Joe's the bloke who bought a family entertainment centre, worked himself half to death, nearly lost his marriage and his mind to the business — and then, with a bit of help, turned it into a machine that ran without him. If you read that book, you met his wife Olivia and their three boys: James, Oliver and George.

This book is the story of what happened next. And I'll be straight with you up front: it's a harder story than the first one. Joe had built a business that finally ran without him — and then the boardroom and the bedroom became the same room. When the marriage came apart, so did everything, and the "system" did the rest: the family court, the restraining orders, the child protection mob, the lawyers, and the silence that nearly finished him off. (If you've read *Battle of the Boardroom v Bedroom*, you know how the business and the marriage got tangled together in the first place. This is where that tangle ends up.)

I've written it the same way as the first one — part story, part what-you-need-to-know — because the same thing is true now as it was then: **you are not alone, and others have been through exactly what you're going through**. If you're a bloke sitting in a car outside a house that used to be yours, or a parent who hasn't heard your kid's voice in weeks, or the new partner of someone caught in this — this book is for you.

The story is based on reality. The names have been changed and some licence has been taken. But the bones of it are true, and every number I quote about the system is real and comes from a proper source — parliamentary inquiries, the courts' own reports, the Bureau of Statistics. I don't make numbers up. I never have.

How to read it: Chapters 1 to 14 are mostly Joe's story, with the facts about the system dropped in where they belong — in boxes I've called **THE NUMBERS** — so you can see it's not just Joe having a whinge. Chapter 15 is where I pull it together and tell you what I reckon we do about it. Read the lot if you can. If you're in the thick of it right now and can only manage a bit, read Chapter 1, then Chapter 14, then come back.

A note before we start. When I wrote the first book I told you money was just a way of keeping score. This one isn't about score. This one's about kids — mine, and yours, and all of them. That's why the campaign that grew out of this story is called *All Kids Lives Matter*. Keep that in the back of your mind the whole way through.

Right. Let me tell you about the worst night of Joe's life, and how he got there.

This is Joe's story, in his words.

PART ONE — THE BATTLE

CHAPTER 1 — THE NIGHT I NEARLY DIDN'T MAKE IT

It was about half past one in the morning and I was sitting in the dark, and I was doing the sums on whether the world would be better off without me in it.

I'm not going to dress that up for you, because if I dress it up it's no use to the bloke who needs to read it. I was sixty-odd years old. I'd built businesses from nothing. I'd been the guy other people came to when they were in trouble. And there I was in the dark, in a house that had stopped being a home somewhere earlier that night, working out whether my boys would be better off with me gone.

They wouldn't have been. I know that now, lying on the other side of it, so grateful it makes my chest hurt that I didn't go through with the stupid plan my head was cooking up. But at half past one that morning I couldn't see it. That's the thing about that particular kind of dark — it does your thinking for you, and it lies.

What I did instead of the stupid plan was open my laptop and write an email to my lawyer.

I don't fully know why. Some instinct told me to get it down before morning could soften it into something I'd talk myself out of. So I wrote what had happened that night in the kitchen — that Olivia had picked up a knife, waved it around, and told me to get out or she'd finish it right then. I wrote it plain. And then I wrote two sentences I've read more times since than anything else I've ever typed:

It's rather late and I'm a bit concerned about going to sleep.

I'm concerned for the boys.

I took a photo of the knife, too. Didn't know why then either. I know now — it was the first page of a filing cabinet I'd end up building over the next five years, because I was about to learn that in this fight, the only thing that can't be twisted around on you later is a document with a date on it.

That's where this story starts. Not in a courtroom. In the dark, at half past one, with a photo of a knife and two sentences about my boys. In the days after that night, something shifted that I didn't have words for at the time. I'd crossed a line I didn't know existed. I wasn't a husband in a rough patch any more; I'd become, without consenting to it, a *case* — a man with a lawyer, a paper trail, a thing that would from now on be measured and filed and argued over. You don't feel the door close behind you when it happens. You just notice, a little later, that the room you're in has different rules, and that the ordinary language of your life — love, home, family, my boys — has quietly been swapped for a colder language of orders and findings and parties, and that nobody handed you a dictionary.

And I did the thing that turned out to matter more than anything else I did in five years, and I did it purely on instinct, half in shock: I started keeping everything. The knife email was page one. I didn't

know yet that I was building the only thing that would ever protect me — a record, dated, that couldn't be re-written by whoever told the tidier story. I just knew, in some animal way, that the truth was suddenly a fragile thing that needed protecting, and that if I didn't hold onto the evidence of my own life, someone else would get to decide what it had been.

Let me tell you how I got there — and, more importantly, what happened after, because the knife wasn't the worst of it. Not by a long way.

THE NUMBERS If you think it's soft or unusual for a grown man to be sitting in the dark like that, it isn't. Separation — the moment a relationship ends — is the single most dangerous time in family life. In the biggest Australian study of these things, more than **half** of the cases where a man killed his partner involved a relationship that had ended or was ending. And more than **half of fathers** in the national survey of separated parents said they'd copped emotional abuse from their ex. Half. You are not the only one. (*Sources: ANROWS intimate-partner homicide review 2010–2018; AIFS Survey of Recently Separated Parents.*)

This is a free sample — the opening of The Battle for the Kids (Book Three of The Battle Series). The full book continues through the fight, the turn, the long shadow, and a complete Field Manual. Read on wherever you got this book.