

WOMAN

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My **GAY** husband is the perfect father



'I never suspected he was gay'

Opening the door to her terraced house in Northampton, **Kristen Williams** looks just like any other wife and mother. She has been married to Steve for nearly 14 years and they have four lovely children—Jermaine, 13, Matthew, 12, Zoey, eight, and Daisy Jane, seven.

Yet for most of their marriage Kristen has known that Steve is gay and they've had separate bedrooms for years. Now 33-year-old Kristen is considering moving into a flat of her own—and she says she'd be happy to leave her children with Steve and a homosexual partner.

'Steve has had a vasectomy, so he can't have any more children—but I can,' she says. 'Because of his love for the kids, I couldn't take them away with me. I'm comfortable with them being brought up in a gay environment—as long as Steve has a loving, caring partner they'll be happy.'

'I love the kids and I wouldn't move too far away from them.'

Steve is also happy with the arrangement. 'Kristen wants more

kids and still has time. I'm keeping the children because that's what will work for us. They love us for what we are and we love them back.'

Steve, 36, has known he was gay since school. By 20, he had a steady boyfriend but kept the relationship a secret from his family. He and his boyfriend split up after two years.

In September 1985 he met Kristen, who worked in the accounts office

Kristen adores her four children but amazingly she's prepared to move out of the family home so that their gay dad can bring them up with another man...

where he was a messenger. They hit it off almost immediately, often commuting into London together from their homes in Basildon, Essex.

They got even closer when Kristen confided in Steve about some of her disastrous relationships with men. But at that point she had no idea that he was gay—he thought he could be conventional and hadn't told her the truth.

'I loved our chats,' she says. 'We began dating and Steve was

unlike any of the men I'd been out with before. He seemed so gentle and kind and I fell in love with him for that. But

I never once suspected he was gay.'

They started sleeping together and Kristen didn't notice anything odd. 'Why should I?' she says. 'He was very sensitive and I enjoyed it.'

Steve, who says he isn't bisexual, had no problems having sex with a



Steve Hill

woman. 'I wasn't thinking of men—Kristen had a great personality and I loved her,' he says.

In April 1986, Kristen learnt she was pregnant. Steve was thrilled.

'I'd always wanted kids,' he says. 'It was as if my life couldn't move

on without them. We also knew that if we had children we wanted to be married. I loved Kris and thought I could bury my gay feelings.'

Steve and Kristen got married later in 1986 and Jermaine was born the following January.

A month later, the couple bumped into Steve's old flame. 'Kristen noticed the awkward glances between us and I felt that I should tell her about him and my gay feelings before someone else did,' says Steve.

Kristen was terribly hurt. 'I was having a hard time with my emotions as a first-time mum anyway and I was in tears for days,' she says. 'I felt cheated because I thought we'd always been honest with each other.'

She eventually calmed down and

amazingly decided to stay with him.

'I loved Steve and wanted more children with him. He was a wonderful father and I convinced myself that being gay wasn't a problem as long as he was faithful,' she says.

Unsurprisingly, however, their relationship began to suffer. 'If anything went wrong—even something as simple as the washing machine breaking—it was a case of blame the 'poof', as if it wouldn't have happened with a 'real' man,' says Steve.

Sex became increasingly rare and for the sole purpose of having children. 'And the less sex we had, the less we wanted it,' says Kristen.

They did have three more children though. Jermaine and Zoey have special needs and Steve and Kristen

became their full-time carers. As the couple concentrated on raising their family, Steve's sexuality seemed less important.

Then in 1995 he had a one-night stand with a gay man. 'I could give up a gay life for only so long,' he explains. 'But I couldn't stop being gay. Although I was drunk at the time, I couldn't keep a secret like that. So I told Kris.'

Kristen says she was much calmer this time. 'I think deep down I knew it would happen eventually, so I was prepared. But I felt we could no longer live as man and wife—from then on we had separate bedrooms. I didn't want to move out. He was still my friend and soulmate.'

Steve agrees. 'We just lived as housemates and every year things have improved between us, which is good for the kids. We've become the best friends we started out as. It's not a case of staying together for the kids—that wouldn't be fair on them or us.'

They're still technically married but they'll eventually get a divorce and live apart when one or both of them are settled in a relationship.

For the last four months Steve has been going out with 41-year-old Simon, who has two children. Kristen has met both Simon and his family and likes them. She's happy that her kids would be brought up in a loving home by Steve and Simon if they decided they wanted to be together long-term.

Kristen would also like to meet someone new herself—she has had several boyfriends since 1995 but nothing too serious.

The couple have tried to be open with their children about Steve's sexuality. Telling them he's

gay wasn't as hard as Steve imagined. 'Matthew asked me why Kris and I didn't sleep in the same room,' he says. 'I said I was different from other dads but there wasn't anything bad about it. Kids have an insatiable curiosity and the questions flowed freely after that. Daisy Jane was interested too.'

'I explained that, while their mum was my best friend, I was what's called 'gay' and this was when two men or two women were attracted to each other.'

'Matthew said: 'Cool', which took me by surprise. Daisy Jane asked: 'So how did you have babies?' I said it was in the normal way between a lady and a man so we could have four wonderful children.'

'We answered their questions and warned them that not everyone might be fine about it,' says Kristen. 'Matthew has told his friends at school and their general reaction still seems to be: 'Cool!'

'Things could get awkward for them but they'll have no trouble telling me if anything makes them unhappy. We're a strong family unit and will get through problems together.'

● Tell us what you think of Kristen and Steve's situation. Write to the address on page 25, marking your envelope Gay Dad.

When he told me, I was in tears for days and I felt I'd been cheated

I loved Kris and thought I'd be able to bury my gay feelings

'I'd always wanted kids, says Steve'



The couple got married in 1986



'Kristen is my best friend,' says Steve

