



# Waiting for Dad

A story about supporting a friend



Mary Koolhof

Illustrated by Mich Omen



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# *Waiting for Dad*

A story about supporting  
a friend

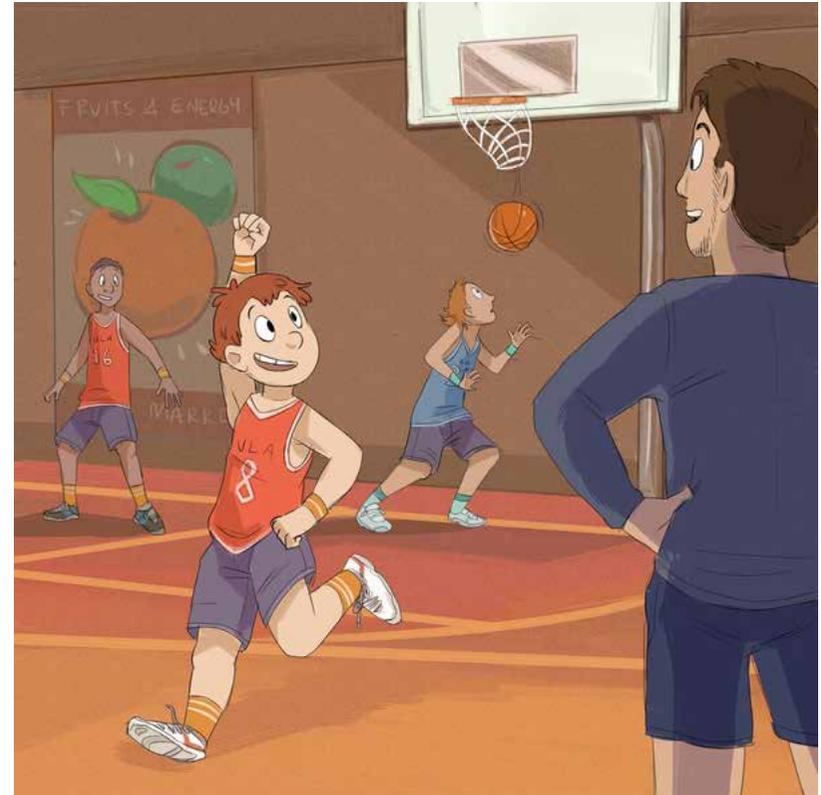
*Mary Koolhof*

*Illustrated by Mich Omen*

Josh ran back to his position on the court.  
He was grinning.

'*Great shot*, Josh!' called out Mitch, his  
coach.

Josh felt happier than he had for ages. It felt  
great to be part of the *team*.



'Hey, Josh!' Josh turned to see Mitch jogging towards him.

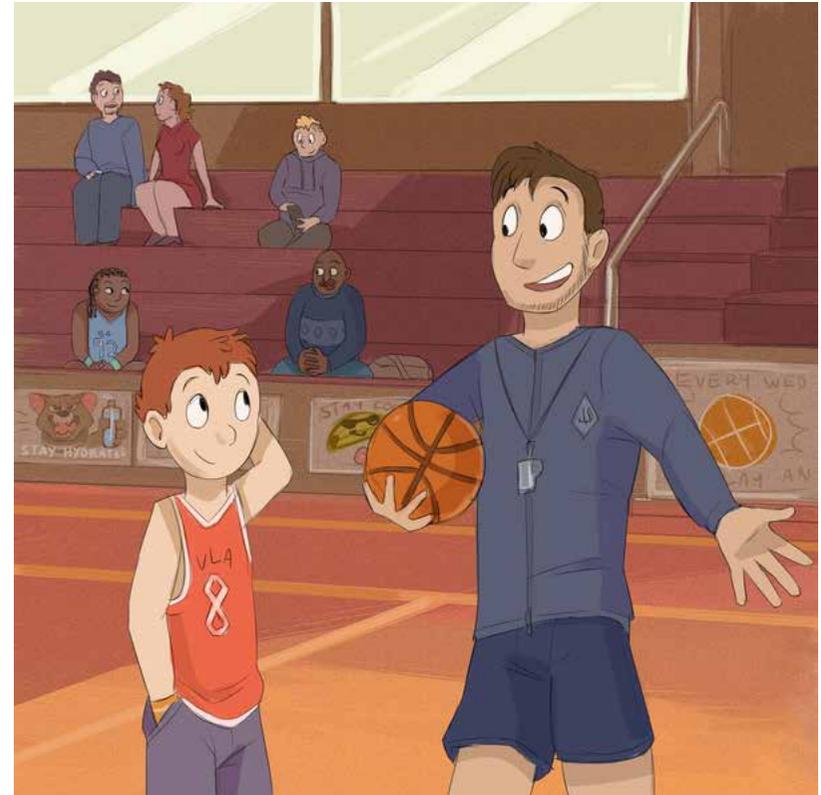
'We've got a big game next Saturday. Do you reckon **your dad** would be able to come along to referee for us?'

Josh looked down.

'Um, there's a bit of a problem, Mitch – Dad's away.'

'Oh, is he away for work again?'

'Ah, no, not really, he's...'



'Look, no problem, Josh. I can ask Tim's dad,' Mitch said.

Josh felt he was holding out on Mitch. He looked at Mitch. 'It's just that...'

His voice faded away.

'No worries, Josh. But if there's something I can help with, *i'm here!*'

Mitch smiled and walked over to get his things. 'See you next Saturday!'



Before school the next day, Josh was talking to his *friend* Max. 'So how was the game last night?' Max asked.

'It was really cool – I scored seven points. Mitch was pleased,' Josh told him.

'He's a *great coach*, isn't he?' said Max.

'Yeah.' Josh's grin faded. 'But I felt bad afterwards. Mitch asked if Dad could come to the game next week to referee.'

'So what's the problem? Your dad can't make it?'



'That's right,' said Josh *miserably*.

'He's ... '

'Does he have to go up north again for work?' asked Max.

'No,' said Josh. 'He's ... away.'

'Well, where is he?' Max asked.

'I don't want to talk about it!' Josh *snapped*.



Josh looked even more miserable.

'Are you OK, Josh?' Max asked. 'You got in that *fight* with Tim last week...'

'Well, it's because of my dad,' Josh said.

'How do you mean?' Max asked.

'Look, he's in prison! All right?' Josh blurted out.

'In prison?' Max was *surprised*. 'But you never said anything ... '

'No, I didn't want everyone to know. Imagine what Jack and those guys would say if they found out!' Josh said.

Max could imagine it. Those guys could be mean.



'Well, it's your business,' said Max. 'It's **up to you** who you want to tell.'

Josh felt a bit better. Max was a real mate.

'I wouldn't mind telling Mrs Wilson, our teacher,' said Josh. 'She's cool, but I think she's been really disappointed in me lately. Especially since I got in that fight with Tim!'

'It's not really like you to get in a fight, is it?' asked Max.



'Normally I can take care of myself,' said Josh, 'but lately I can't think straight. I don't really know how I feel – I can't explain it.'

'Well, that's fair enough,' said Max. 'It must be tough, with your dad in prison. No wonder you're feeling a bit **confused**.'

'Yeah, it is tough. And not just for me. It's hard on Mum and Abbie, too.'

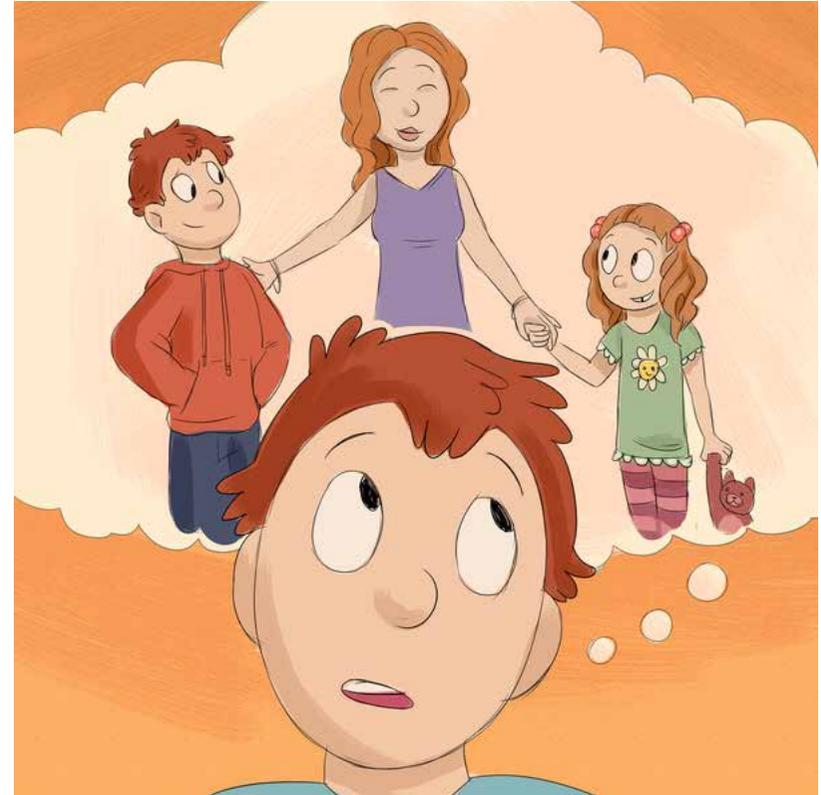
Max nodded.



'And Abbie's only six,' Josh said. 'She doesn't really *understand* what's going on.'

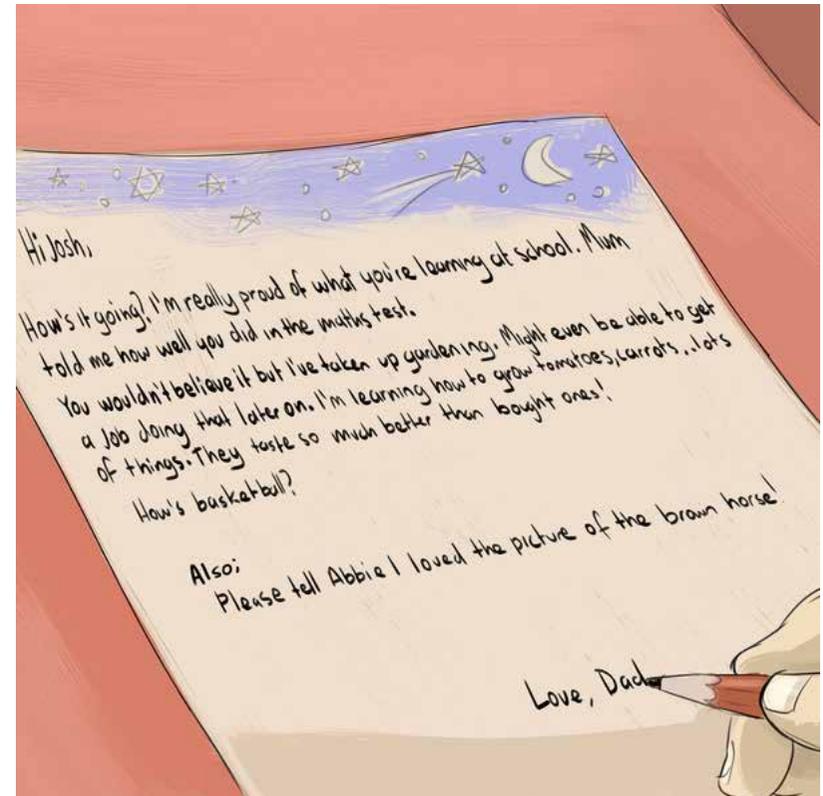
'At least your mum told you, and *you know* where your dad is,' said Max.

'Can you see him?' Max asked.



'I get to see him sometimes. And I can write to him. He says he's not great at writing. But I don't mind that. I *wish* he'd write to me more,' said Josh.

'So what about Abbie?' Max asked. 'She's too little to write much.'



'You know she's mad about horses?' Josh said. 'Abbie keeps drawing pictures of horses to send Dad.'

Max *laughed*. 'Last time I was at your house, Abbie drew me a horse to take home and put on the fridge!'

'That'd be right. Dad reads horse stories on to a CD from prison, for her to listen to at bedtime. *She loves it,*' Josh said.



Josh was thinking.

'You know, talking about telling Mrs Wilson...'

'Yeah?' Max asked.

'Well,' Josh said, 'I think I might.'

'**Good idea,**' said Max. 'I bet she'd like to know what's going on. She knows you haven't been yourself lately.'

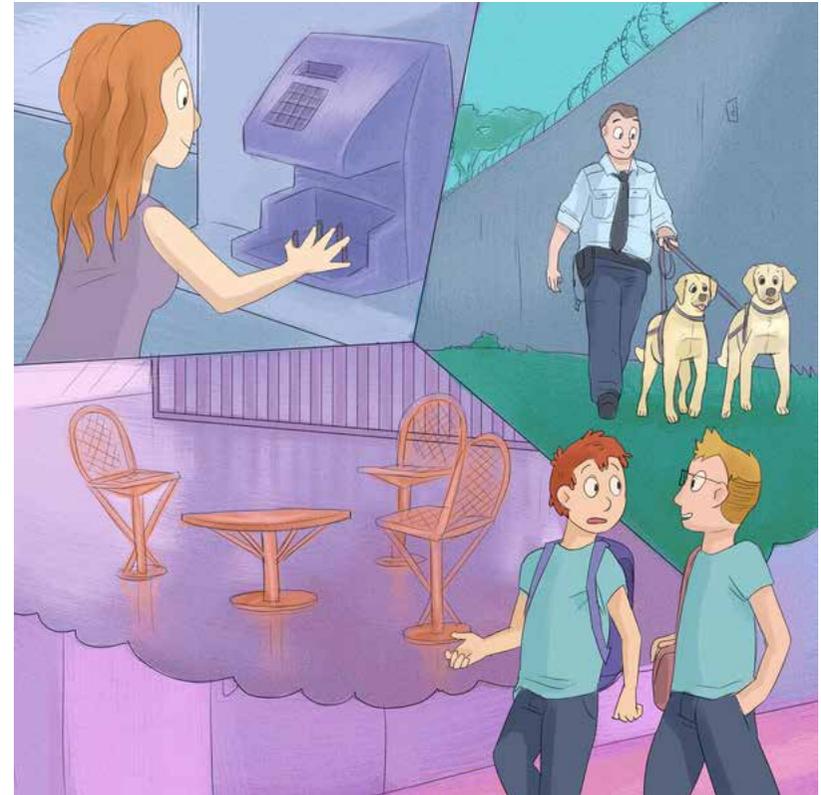


'Are you going to see your dad again soon?'  
Max asked.

'Yeah, Mum's still mad at him. But she  
said we could go to see him in the *school  
holidays.*'

'So what was it like at the prison?' asked  
Max.

'It was kind of scary,' said Josh, 'especially  
for Abbie. There are these really high walls  
with wire. And it's not like being with Dad  
at home. There's not much to do there. It  
feels kind of *weird.*'



'Yeah, I see what you mean,' said Max.

'But,' said Josh, looking *brighter*, 'Dad said he might be moved to minimum security soon. That'd be heaps better for visiting – he said there's an outside playground there for the kids. Abbie would love that.'

Max nodded. 'Yeah, I get that. And at least your dad **wants** to see you.'

Josh looked at his friend. Max's dad wasn't around much.



'Dad wants me to do well at school,' Josh continued. 'He thinks it'll give me better chances than he had.'

'I guess that's right,' said Max. 'Mrs Wilson says the same thing. She said she didn't have it easy when she was young. She was really proud when she graduated and got a good job to support her family.'

'Dad told me that sometimes kids can come to a **Homework Club** at the prison and see their parents there,' said Josh.

'That'd be OK!' Max said.



'So have you had a *letter* from your dad lately?' Max asked. 'Or can you text him?'

'No, I haven't had a letter in a while. And things like texting, email and Facebook aren't allowed in the prison.'

'That's tough on you,' said Max.

'Yeah, but sometimes it's tough for Dad, too,' Josh replied.

'Sometimes he doesn't feel like writing. Nanna told me it's not that Dad doesn't love me. She said that when he feels down, he goes sort of *quiet* and doesn't talk much. Nanna said Dad was like that even when he was a kid.'



'I wish we could phone him,' Josh said, 'but we're not allowed to do that. We have to wait for him to ring us.'

Max was surprised.

'There's only one phone where he is, and it's pretty expensive to make calls,' Josh told Max.

'Sometimes things come up and he can't make the call when he said he would.' Josh looked a bit down.

'**That sucks,**' Max said. 'I've heard some people can Skype their mum or dad in prison. Could you do that?'

'I'll ask Dad about that,' Josh said.



'Well, back to the basketball situation,' said Max. 'What about seeing if your Uncle Brendan could referee? He's really keen on basketball, isn't he?'

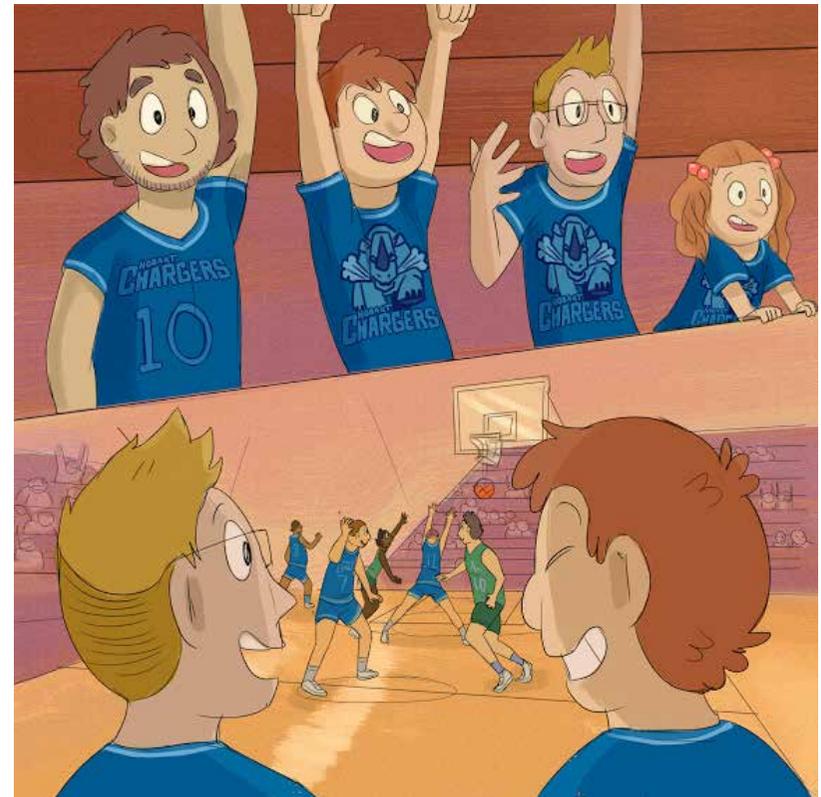
'Yeah, Uncle Brendan's *cool!*' said Josh. 'He's taking me to a Hobart Chargers game again next weekend.'

'Wow!' Max felt a bit jealous. 'Do you think he'd take me, too?'

'I reckon,' said Josh. 'And I can't wait until Dad can come with us!'

'Maybe tell your dad that,' said Max. 'I think he'd like to know.'

Josh felt happy. It was good to have a *mate* like Max.



## Disclaimer

*Josh and Abbie aren't real people and the characters in this book are fictional. However there are quite a few children who have a parent or close family member in prison, and that can be tough.*

*Here are some of the ways families can stay in touch and access help and support.*

## RESOURCES FOR KIDS

- Sesame Street Incarceration Toolkit:  
<http://www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/incarceration>
- Kids Helpline: Free call 1800 55 1800 for children and young people 5-25 years 24/7

## BOOKING A PRISON VISIT

- <http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/prisonservice/visiting>

## TASMANIAN FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- [www.onesimus.org.au](http://www.onesimus.org.au)

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

- Aboriginal Court Support Worker: 1300 663 773

## MENTAL HEALTH

- Youth Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- Headspace: 1800 650 890
- Reach Out/Lifeline: 13 11 14

## PARENTAL SUPPORT/GUIDANCE

- Parent Line: 1300 808 178  
24/7 for 0-5 years with stressful parenting issues
- Shine for Kids: Assisting children and young people with a loved one in the criminal justice system through services inside the prison, the community, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people, online resources and publications  
<http://shineforkids.org.au/support-for-children-and-families/>
- Children and Young Persons Program (CHYPP): 6233 6981  
Provides free therapeutic parent child sessions (parents and children 0 to 5), one on one counselling (children 5 to 17), group sessions for parents and children (5 and over)  
[www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/45856/FVCSA\\_Children\\_and\\_Young\\_Persons\\_Program.pdf](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/45856/FVCSA_Children_and_Young_Persons_Program.pdf)
- Kids in Focus: 1800 243 232 free call  
Support and counselling to families affected by parental alcohol or other drug use. It supports positive changes for parents and their children. A free, voluntary service offered in Hobart, Devonport and Launceston

Sincere thanks to Stephen Pinkus, Bridgewater PCYC outside school hours care, The Tasmania Prison Service, The Onesimus Foundation, inmates at Risdon Prison and their families, Children Affected by Parental Imprisonment working group Tasmania (CAPI), The Department of Justice, and The Hobart Chargers for their support, feedback and contributions.

Other books available in this series developed and produced by The Salvation Army – Communities for Children South East Tasmania are:

*My brother Sam – A story about bullying*  
suitable for children under 7 years

*Alicia helps Bec take a stand – A story about cyberbullying*  
suitable for children 9-12 years

*Tom and Jamal speak up – A story about cybersafety*  
suitable for children 9-12 years

*Tahlia and Jasmin plan a party – A story about staying safe and having fun*  
suitable for children 9-12 years

*Jake and Emily work it out – A story about making decisions*  
suitable for children 9-12 years

This is a Salvation Army - Communities for Children program South East Tasmania Initiative, funded by The Australian Government Department of Social Services



# Hobart Chargers Autographs

Developed and produced by The Salvation Army and Communities for Children South East Tasmania, this book aims to help remove the stigma and isolation associated with parental imprisonment. It is also to encourage children to discuss their feelings with someone they trust. It conveys the message that friends can be a powerful support for anyone who is experiencing any kind of family difficulties.

Communities for Children aims to improve the development, health and wellbeing of children up to the age of 12 and their families through innovative early intervention and prevention programs.

Communities for Children provides support for parents and children to improve child development, child safety and family functioning. We promote social inclusion ensuring families are connected to local communities. Activities and resources focus on supporting parents to raise children who are confident individuals with the capacity to reach their full potential.

For further information about Communities for Children please see the website: [www.cfctas.org.au](http://www.cfctas.org.au).





**Waiting for Dad** was written for children and pre-teens who may be affected by the imprisonment of a parent or close family member.

**Waiting for Dad** is suitable for children 9-12 years old.

### Mary Koolhof

Author



Mary Koolhof is a teacher and writer who has been involved in many programs supporting children and young people in Tasmania. She has great respect for the work done by The Salvation Army through Communities for Children and is very pleased to be able to support this work.

### Mich Omen

Illustrator



Mich Omen is a professional animator and cartoonist who specialises in character design and comics. He is Melbourne based but also does collaborative work overseas. He previously has worked for Blue Rocket Productions as a background design and character rigger. He now works in mostly personal based projects such as comics and hand drawn animation.

