



Family Matters

Plays About Family Changes



By Catherine Gourley



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Note to the reader: Be sure to look at the Glossary on page 32 to find definitions of words that might be unfamiliar.

The Day My Dad Left

Muscle aches, headaches, tiredness—Brandon has felt sick ever since his father and mother split up. Is his illness all in his mind, a way to guilt his father into coming back—or can sadness truly cause physical symptoms? What can Brandon do to make his health—and his life—feel normal again?

Characters:

Narrators 1, 2, 3

Brandon Choi, an eighth grader

Mrs. Choi, Brandon's mother

Mr. Choi, Brandon's father

Josh, Brandon's friend, also in the eighth grade

Josh's father

Scene 1

- Narrator 1:** Every Saturday, Brandon and his friend Josh play hockey in the alley behind Josh's house.
- Narrator 2:** This Saturday, however, is different. Today, Brandon is sitting in his mother's car in a city 100 miles* away. They are parked in front of a tall brick apartment building. This is where his dad now lives.
- Brandon:** Can you come in with me?
- Mrs. Choi:** I'll go to the door with you, but this is your time to be with your father.
- Brandon:** (*not looking at her*) Okay, but I don't know what to say to him.
- Mrs. Choi:** He's still your dad, even if he no longer lives with us. He wants to be with you.
- Brandon:** Sure he does. That's why he doesn't live in the same house as I do anymore. That's why he moved to a city two hours away. That's why he's getting engaged to another woman who has three kids—all younger than me.
- Narrator 3:** The door to the apartment building opens, and Brandon's father steps out. He waves. Brandon looks away.
- Mrs. Choi:** (*softly*) You don't have to stay the full three hours. When you're ready to leave, call me.
- Brandon:** Where will you be?
- Mrs. Choi:** (*She points to a restaurant on the corner.*) I'll be right there, reading my book.
- Narrator 1:** Brandon's father taps the window on Brandon's side of the car. He is smiling.
- Narrator 2:** His father has been gone for three months. During school vacations, three months always seemed like such a short time to Brandon. Now, it seems like a lifetime.

* 100 miles = 160 kilometers

Scene 2

Narrator 3: Inside his father's apartment for the first time, Brandon sees things that surprise and upset him. Mr. Choi notices Brandon looking at toys for young children and a framed photo of a woman and three kids.

Mr. Choi: Carol and the kids are out. I thought maybe, since this was the first time you were visiting here, that . . . well, it might be better if it were just you and me.

Brandon: (*picking up the photo of Carol and the kids*) So do they live here, with you?

Mr. Choi: No, no. Not until the divorce is final and Carol and I get married. (*He hesitates.*) I'm sorry, Brandon. This must be weird for you. Let's talk about something else. You still playing hockey?

Brandon: (*defensively*) Why would I stop playing hockey? Because you left? I don't think so!

Mr. Choi: (*sighs*) Good. I used to like taking you to the games. We had fun, didn't we?

Narrator 1: Brandon shrugs. His stomach feels queasy—just as it has on and off for the last three months . . . ever since his father left.

Mr. Choi: So, are you hungry? We can get a burger.

Brandon: I'm not hungry.

Mr. Choi: What do you want to do, Brandon?

Brandon: (*angrily*) I want to go home.

Narrator 2: What Brandon doesn't tell his father is that he wants him to come home, too.

Scene 3

Narrator 3: On Monday after school . . .

Josh: Guess what? My dad got four tickets for the hockey play-offs in two weeks. You and your dad can come with us! Isn't that cool?