



# **A Real Boy: How Autism Shattered Our Lives - and Made a Family from the Pieces**

*Christopher Stevens, Nicola Stevens*

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We feel like parents in a fairytale turned to stone by a curse and condemned to stand like statues with our hearts thudding in our chests as our son plays wild games, all alone in the palace. He sees us he knows us, he expects us always to be in our right places - but he has no idea that we are human too.

David is eleven years old. He is happy, healthy and affectionate. He loves school, climbing trees and Disney songs. But he's also profoundly autistic. Imagine being, like David, unable to speak more than a few words and unable to express your most basic needs. He is oblivious to danger and blind to other people's emotions, including the pleas of his parents. He is unaware of the chaos that he creates and is completely unmoved by the heartbreak that he causes.

This extraordinarily moving account describes the heartbreak, and the unexpected joy, of autism. With raw honesty, Christopher and Nicola Stevens lay bare their experiences, which are by turns harrowing, hilarious, and inspirational. Autism is often depicted as a lonely affliction but, as David's story unfolds, his parents reveal how the condition has given them an unbreakable togetherness; an insight into prejudice, as well as kindness; an understanding of life without words or language; and an intense appreciation of their children. Caring for David is an all-consuming experience...and through it they have learned, most of all, the meaning of unconditional love.

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