



## REAL-LIFE: IT MIGHT NOT BE THE DEATH SENTENCE IT ONCE WAS, BUT LIVING WITH HIV IS

**W**hen 36-year-old Helen went to the doctor with a painful rash on her chest and arms, she was relieved to hear that it was probably nothing more than a food allergy that would resolve itself in a matter of days.

But within hours, Helen's body was almost covered in angry blistering sores, suggesting something far more serious.

Two weeks later, her world came crashing down around her when a health visitor told her she was HIV positive.

Almost a year on, Helen has still not told her dark secret to a soul – none of her friends, her housemates – not even her children, who still live in Africa.

It's not a deception she's comfortable with, but it's the only way she believes she can survive from day to day. She's put her seven-year career as a care worker on hold while she comes to terms with the harsh reality of a life not knowing when illness will next strike.

Sitting on a comfy chair, dressed in green jogging pants with painted nails and fuschia

**"I went to the canal and sat there. I seriously thought about throwing myself in, but then I thought about my mum and kids and I couldn't do it."**

HIV sufferer Helen

pink lipstick, Helen is, ironically, a picture of health, although she says her body still bears the scars of the vicious attack of shingles last June.

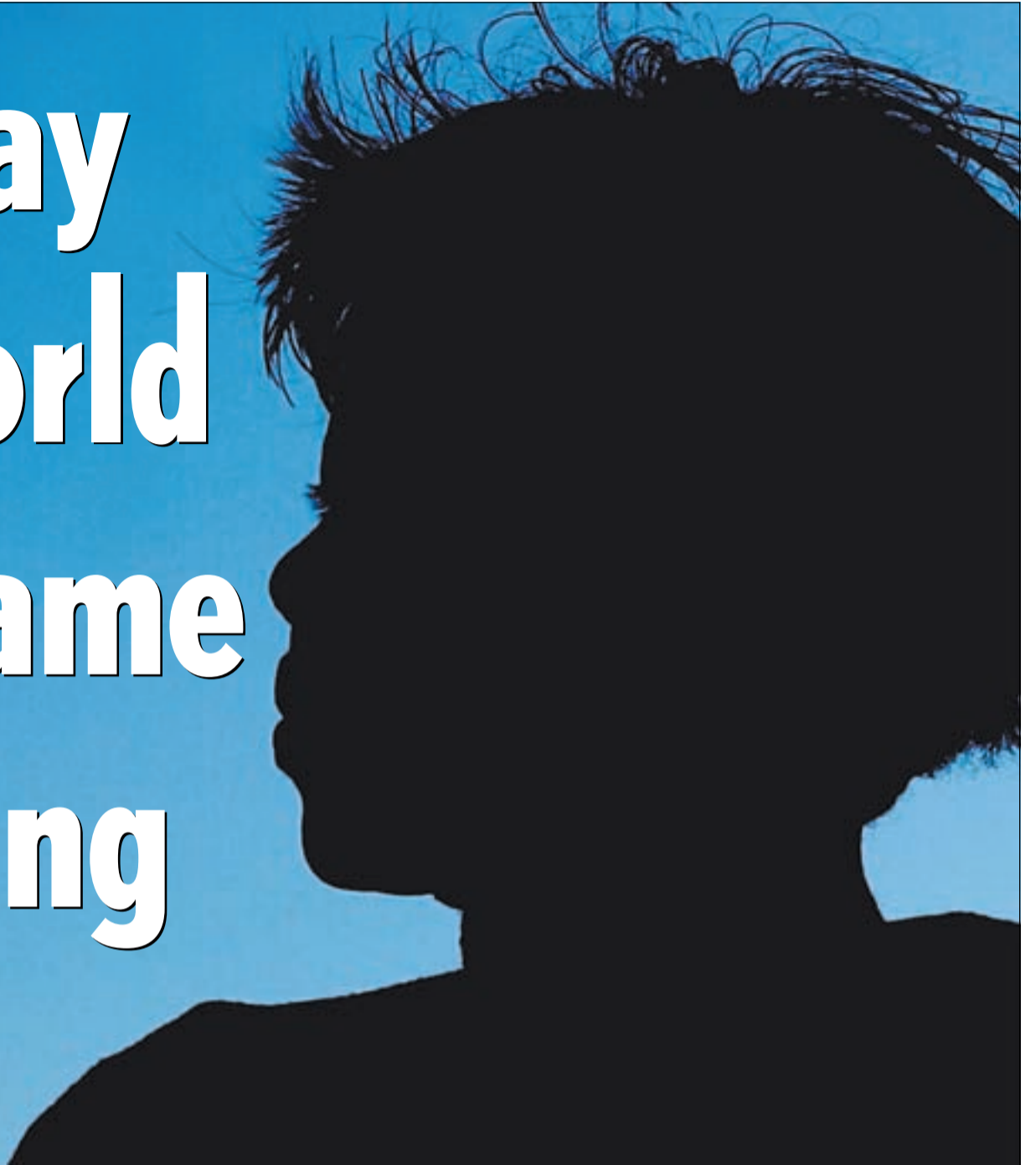
She's already started to suffer from just a few of the problems associated with HIV – severe pains in the feet and legs and excruciating pain in her gums.

"My shingles was so bad I went to the hospital for treatment and they gave me a blood test. Then they wrote and said I had to go in and see them.

"One of the health workers sat me down. She was a very, very nice lady but she just said, 'I have something to tell you'.

"My world just came crashing down. She stayed with me for two hours. I cried and she cried

# The day my world just came crashing down



too, but she made me feel better by telling me it was better than having cancer in terms of the treatment available now."

Not expecting to receive such earth-shattering news, Helen had gone to the hospital alone. Despite the sensitive way her results had been explained, she was left in a state of complete isolation and despair.

"Afterwards I went to the canal and sat there. I thought about throwing myself in, but then I

thought about my mum and kids and I couldn't do it."

Helen came to live in England in 1994, leaving her native Kenya, her two children, aged 14 and 16, and the rest of her family behind to start a new life.

"I came here because I loved Britain and knew a lot of its history."

The most twisted irony of Helen's story is that in spite of HIV and Aids being rife in her home continent, when she ar-

rived in Britain, she was a perfectly healthy young woman looking forward to success and happiness in a new country.

After her first long-term relationship ended in London, Helen fell in love with another man, who she believes infected her.

Three months later, he deserted her, leaving only a £750 credit card bill behind. Helen explained: "I told him about the HIV, but he stayed with me.

Then, he just disappeared. I came home one night and he had packed all his things. I think he's living with someone else now."

Following her betrayal, Helen moved to Leicester to be with friends – but prejudice has left her feeling as isolated as ever.

One particular event made up her mind to keep her devastating condition to herself.

She said: "I sat with my housemates watching the television

and there was something on about HIV and Aids in Africa. It was clear they didn't understand anything about it.

"The programme was all about prostitution and they thought that it was the only cause of HIV in Africa.

"At that point, I knew I could never tell them. I felt so sad and alone, I just didn't want to be in the same room as them any more, so I locked myself in the toilet and cried.

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## TREAT YOUR MAN

**IT MAY** suffer from naff kids-on-the-back-of-the-schoolbus undertones, but Lynx is apparently the UK's leading grooming brand.

Its latest scent, Pulse, combines basil, lavender and jasmine and a hint of sandalwood. Hmmmm, but is it as chewy as we all remember?

Well, persuade your man not to empty half a can on to himself and it is not too bad.

It borrows the muskiness of some of the posher brands and, if you did not know it was Lynx, the chances are you would not guess.

That is, unless the funky fragrance is still lingering a day later.

Why they think you need a 24-hour formula to be a hit with the ladies is beyond us at Curve. Perhaps it has something to do with wearing down the opposition.

It costs around £2.79 for the body spray and £2.19 for the shower gel.



## TREAT YOUR KIDS

**THEY** are all the rage for smaller bedrooms – a bunk with cupboards/desk/bookcase – you name it – underneath but, before you rush out and buy the first one you see, they are not all the same.

Stompa furniture is one of the best-selling options, from Norway. It is built to withstand everything from a two-year-old to a gaggle of teenagers and has some really clever design ideas to make the most of the space.

There are pull-out desks, hidden wardrobes, stylish computer tables and sleep-over beds which emerge from false drawers – plenty of solutions to finding more room without having to move house.

Your children will be the envy of their friends, but just because you have forked out between £500 and £1,000, don't expect a fresh burst of energy in the tidying stakes.

Stompa furniture is available



from World of Furniture, in Hummerstone Road, Leicester, or Pickworths, of Loughborough.

**TREAT YOURSELF** with Häagen-Dazs's new chocolate brownie flavour ice-cream.

Unleashed this month, it is just in time to help cool you on those long hot summer days.

The dedicated researchers from the American company have combined Dutch cocoa with richly-roasted Texan walnuts and traditional American brownies to set your mouth watering.

This decadent mix is then plunged into Häagen-Dazs's creamy, smooth ice cream.

Available now, a 500ml pot costs around £3.79.