



Last Christmas Mike re-proposed. We were going to renew our vows this year, but he died before we got the chance



...AS A WIDOW

Nicky Beard (above) is 33 and lives in Lincoln with her two children, Ella, six, and Jack, three. Her husband Mike, 31, was killed in a road traffic accident in March

Last week, Ella sat down and wrote a Christmas card to her dad. As she put it in the envelope, she dutifully taped a pen to it, in case he didn't have one in heaven to write back to her. Holding her as she cried about him not being with us this year, I wished I could just cancel Christmas.

This year will be my first as a widow and I feel overwhelmed at the thought of Mike, my husband of six years, not being here. He made me feel safe – he was a handsome 6ft 4in rugby coach, but it was his calm personality I fell for.

In March, Mike had just set off home after teaching a rugby class to children when his bicycle collided with their school bus. He died at the scene. Nine months on, it still feels completely surreal to be



Above: Nicky with rugby coach Mike. Top: with their children, Ella and Jack

carrying on without him. At an age where my friends are still getting married, I've had to bury my husband.

For the first three months I was in such deep shock, I just carried on as normal. But then it hit me that this was my reality now and I fell apart. I wanted to die. I suffered anxiety attacks and my weight dropped from 9st to 6½st because I just couldn't eat. I've had support from a charity called WAY (Widowed And Young), which has helped, but I still miss him every day.

Christmas will just be something to get through. My family are on hand and for Ella and Jack's sake we have to make it magical, because they've suffered enough. Every year we used to take the children to Lincoln's Christmas market, to see the lights and wander among the stalls. I'm still planning to take them, because Mike would want me to keep up those traditions and be strong.

Last Christmas Eve was extra special, as Mike re-proposed to me with a beautiful eternity ring, with a diamond for each year we'd been together. He wanted us to renew our vows this year, but he died before we got the chance.

My sister is going to spend Christmas Eve with us as I can't face the thought of waking up and being the only one there with the children as they open their presents. I need support because I know I might struggle to contain my emotions, and I don't want to get upset in front of them. We'll spend the rest of the day with my parents.

Although it's good to see Ella and Jack excited, I'm nervous that they'll be very upset when it hits home that their dad won't be here for it. And once again I'll have to pick up the pieces. As the day approaches, I'm feeling anxious – will I be able to cope? To be honest, I'll be happy when it's all over.