

ONLY **69p**

Surgery stole my sex life!

17 May 2018 69p

Issue 20

Pick Me Up!



Be warned

FULL OF GREAT PUZZLES!

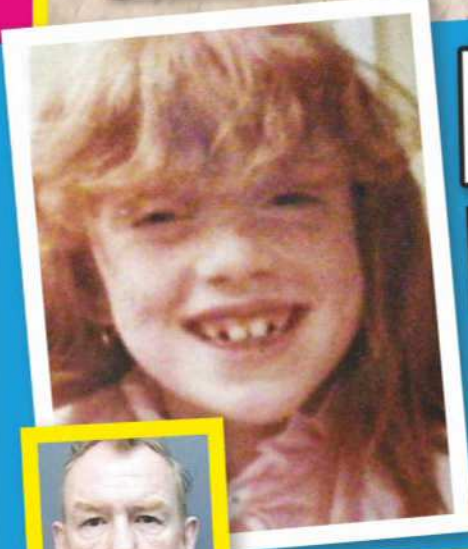


Born to **SAVE his big brother?**

MY STORY WILL SHOCK YOU



ONLINE SHAME
My holiday LIES came back to haunt me



Mum found my **UNCLE in my bed... **TWICE!****

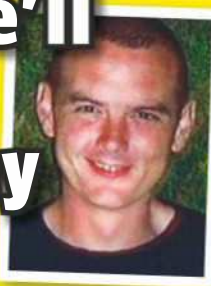


WHY COULD NO-ONE STOP HIM?



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You're One in a MILLION!



Paula Cox from Devon tells us why her amazing mum Norma Cox deserves a treat...

Where to start! My mum is one of the strongest women

that you'll ever meet.

Whenever you need her, she drops everything to be at your side.

Throughout my life, Mum, 77, has always stayed strong, putting on a brave face in the toughest of times.

She has lost two daughters – my sister Karen, aged 7 in 1967, then Tracey, who was 40 when she died of leukaemia in 2002.

I lost two sisters, but my mum lost her beloved children.

Our relationship has always been very strong. She's my best friend.

I even moved to the same street just so that I could be closer to her.

Right now, she's caring for my dad David, 80, as he struggles not only with

inflammatory arthritis but is also fighting kidney cancer.

You'll never ever hear my mum complain or asking for anything, she's happy just so long as the family is.

It would mean such a lot to me for my mum to receive some lovely flowers.

She deserves the world and this is just a small way of saying thank you for everything.

I love my mum so much.

So close: me and my mum Norma

With over 30 years' experience of helping celebrate life's special moments, FREE delivery by post and a FREE pop-up vase, a gorgeous bouquet from Flying Flowers is a lovely way to say, *I'm thinking of you*. See flyingflowers.co.uk

To nominate someone

Tell us who you think deserves to receive some lovely blooms and the reason why. See page 4 for details of how to get in touch with us.



WORDS: EMMA ROSSITER



Sneaky peek at this week!

That's no lady! p18



My brave babies... p6

A quick word!

£25! WIN PUZZLE 1

Unscramble our word of the week. Clue: What Paula wants to thank Norma for. (You'll find the word on this page!) Enter on page 45.

GETHVERINY

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Your Wild week...

Having a good one? Share your pics and get **£25 CASH**



My daughter Ella was practically bouncing off the walls after visiting our local trampoline park. *Vicky Ozolnieks, Birmingham*



We loved cooling off in the Ice Bar in London - we got our hands on some cocktails for internal warmth! *Natasha Tong, Kent*



Great food, great views, even better company... My husband and I at Marco Pierre White in Birmingham. *Amanda Hadley, Cradley Heath, W Mids*

GET IN TOUCH

Send us your stories and photos, including all names and ages, a daytime phone number and full address.

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Oh how he wished this ice cream was real! You can't go to the pier and not have an ice cream, though! *Wayne Rolfe, Upminster*



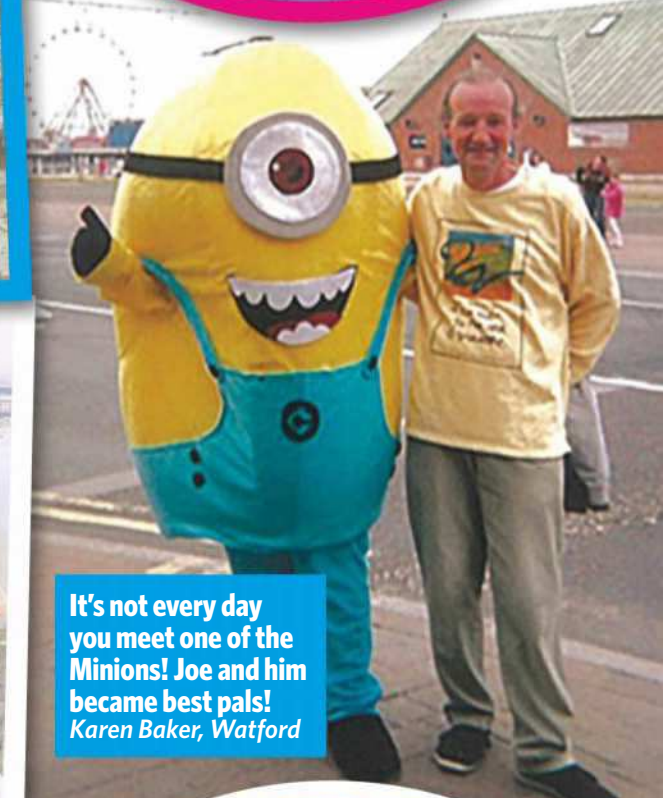
Caught in the middle - here I am at the equator line in Quito, Ecuador!
Bethan Hope, via e-mail



It may have been cold for my birthday but I was nice and toasty in the hot tub! Absolute perfection!
Hannah Kelsall, East Sussex



We had spectacular views in Budapest, but the highlight was definitely meeting these loved-up doves.
Lindsey Smith, Shrewsbury



It's not every day you meet one of the Minions! Joe and him became best pals!
Karen Baker, Watford



They say an elephant never forgets, but I will never forget the mesmerising artwork on this one. Stunning!
Louise Milne, Worthing



I had to kiss a lot of frogs but I have definitely found my prince!
Mrs Bishop, Essex

Our recurring NIGHTMARE

Her little boy had just beaten cancer. But fate wasn't finished with Marie-Anne Cornelius, 30, from Hastings...



My little girl Marley

Gringing, I unlocked the bathroom door and yelled for my partner Dave, 51. 'What is it, love?' he asked.

Then he glanced at the pregnancy test clutched in my shaking hand.

'We're having a baby!'

I squealed.

I'd met Dave at a nightclub where he was a bouncer, back when I was 19.

Despite the 30-year age gap, we'd fallen for each other hard.

Two years on we were living together, and now expecting our first baby.

I already had a 3-year-old daughter Rosie, who Dave had taken under his wing.

We were all so excited about the baby's arrival.

On 22 August 2009, our son Buddy-Lee arrived.

And it wasn't long before we started thinking about having another.

On 28 November 2012, our second son Denny-Rea was born.

We enjoyed every moment of family life.

Little Denny was such an extrovert, showing off his singing and dancing skills.

The centre of attention!

But during Christmas 2015,

Dave and I noticed he wasn't his usual bubbly self.

Sniffly, crying a lot, he'd lost that cracking smile everyone commented on.

And then we started to notice the bruises.

Tiny little blue marks all over his body.

'Maybe the kids have been play fighting?' Dave suggested.

Our boys did like a bit of rough-and-tumble.

But mother's instinct told me that there was more to it.

Lately, Denny wanted to be carried everywhere.

And a few days later, as I was lifting his legs to change his nappy, he let out an agonised scream.

'Mummy, it hurts!' he wailed, clutching his ankle.

Worried, I took him to the doctor's.

My GP said it was just growing pains.

But I wasn't convinced.

By now, I was pregnant once again.

And in January 2016, while Dave looked after the kids, I went to Conquest Hospital in Hastings for the scan.

I was relieved to see the baby was fine, but I was still worried about Denny, 3.

So, taking him to A&E, I told a nurse what had happened.

A doctor ran blood tests – and within 20 minutes, he came

back with the results.

'I'm afraid your son's blood count is low – he's showing signs of cancer,' he told me.

I was breathless with shock.

Yes, I'd been worried something was wrong...

But cancer...?

I could barely speak through the tears as I rang Dave, told him Denny

was being transferred to St George's Hospital in London for more tests.

Dave joined me at St George's, where we were told Denny had lymphoblastic leukaemia and would need intensive treatment.

'Is it genetic? Are our other children safe?' I asked the doctor, fearfully thinking of the life growing inside me.

'We've never seen it occur in siblings before,' we were assured.

Thank heavens for small mercies...

I spent every moment by Denny's side as he underwent blood transfusions and chemotherapy.

By now, I was 8 months pregnant.

Sleeping in a hospital

Yes, I'd been worried something was wrong – but this...?



Still giggling! Dave, Denny and Marley

DEVASTATING REAL LIFE



With baby Teddy, our glimmer of joy...



My two poorly angels

fighting off septicaemia.

'You're such a brave boy,' Dave told him.

During Denny's treatment, we enjoyed some happiness when our daughter Marley-Mae was born in February 2016.

She was beautiful and healthy.

Denny was in the cancer ward as I lay in the labour ward with my baby girl in my arms.

When we took her in to visit him, he said how much he loved her already.

And as the months passed, the treatment on Marley-Mae's big brother began working.

In summer 2017, I fell pregnant again.

And making it a double win, our gorgeous Denny went into remission.

Hearing him sing and laugh again was magical.

Our boy was back!

Starting school last September, he continued on low-dose medication and had monthly hospital checkups.

Only, at 21 months, little Marley grew subdued...

Usually she'd try her best to keep up with her

brothers' games.

Now she was pale and quiet.

As I changed her nappy one day, taking hold of her ankles, she screamed in pain.

My blood ran cold as Dave and I looked at each other.

We knew that sound.

It was the same noise Denny had made when he first became unwell.

'The doctor said it's not genetic,' Dave reassured me, seeing my panic.

But days later, Marley's nursery noticed she was walking strangely.

I couldn't ignore it any longer, took Marley to Conquest Hospital.

As our girl had more tests, the sick feeling of dread was overwhelming.

And this January, two years to the day from when Denny was diagnosed, we were told Marley had exactly the same form of leukaemia as Denny.

'No!' I cried.

It was like a nightmare - the worst *deja vu*.

Me pregnant again, being

told I could lose one of my children again...

'But we were told it couldn't happen,' I raged.

Just like Denny had been, Marley was admitted to St George's Hospital.

And now I sat by her bedside, just as I'd sat by her big brother's.

'We've never seen siblings suffering this before,' the doctors told us.

As Marley started the treatment, we rallied round, hoping for the same results as Denny.

'We have to stay positive,' Dave said.

We told the kids about Marley, tried to reassure them

that their sibling would be OK. Denny understood, of course.

'I don't want Marley to die,' he cried.

Now 5, he still had regular checkups with a specialist.

And at one of these, three weeks into Marley's treatment, fate kicked us in the teeth.

Denny's cancer was back.

I don't know how I kept

At times I feel battered. But I'm full of hope - I have to be

going. I felt so tired and beaten by it all.

Denny was fully aware of his situation. We couldn't keep a thing from him.

He was moved to London's Royal Marsden Hospital.

It was agony.

But seeing my two children lying next to each other having chemotherapy, their eyes full of fear and pain, I knew I had to stay strong.

In February, Marley developed an infection in her spine and was moved back to St George's Hospital.

It meant Dave and I were racing between our two kids.

As you read our story, both of our children are being treated in the Marsden, and we continue to fight the cancer as a family.

Our beautiful boy Teddy was born at the end of February.

And he offered us a glimmer of hope.

He will be able to supply stem cells which could be used to treat Denny and possibly Marley, too.

My time with David is sparse, but I know he's there when I need him.

I lean on him and he leans on me.

We have to stay strong. Our kids need us.

We've been incredibly unlucky, having two young children diagnosed with the same cancer.

And there are times when I feel so battered by it all.

But I'm full of hope. I have to be.


Giving in to this awful disease just isn't an option.

WIN
PUZZLE 2

Follow it!

Solve the puzzle to spell out a term related to the picture. The arrows show you where to put your answers. The answer is spelled in the yellow squares. Enter on page 45.

£1,000!



	Necessary		Composer Stravinsky		Stefani, singer		Stains (cloth)		Amusement		Measure of land		Ora, UK singer
	Marshy, swampy						Dirty ragged child						
	Go off the point		Be obliged to repay				Glide over snow		Animal coat		Religious ceremony		Robber's stolen items
									Like a wild animal				
	Morally just		Peeve		Vote back into political office (2-5)		Opening to the mouth		Chignons		Epoch		Form of a verb
Ecuador's neighbour		Bond	Employed				Text or book of words of an opera						
									Tiny particle		Petite, Jackie Wilson song		
Female rank equivalent to knight		Have a cigarette					Bambo-eating animal					Finds the sum of	— Marshall, Nick in My Family
			Warning signs		Shoemakers' tools				Horned viper		Enquire		
Nought		Sherlock Holmes' creator					Azaria, actor	Wrath, rage	Birch-like tree				
			Agitated, provoked		Dressing room in a church		Tubular bells				Mineral-bearing rock		Develop a liking for (4,2)
Whichever person		Race (an engine)					Harmful tobacco element		Spicy tomato sauce or dip	Stakes			
							Lightly grilled	See photo			Seed cases	Oboe's mouthpiece	Blackthorn's fruit
Measures of electrical resistance		Former world superpower (inits)						Dowel	Since		up, feels brighter		
			Knock gently						Besides			Ribbon-like fish	
Ran fast		Pendant jewellery											
			Longing				Rowing poles					Female antelope	

PHOTO: ALAMY

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20
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£20

Your Brainwaves...

You're a clever bunch! Earn **£25 CASH** for your brilliant tips!



Night in - on the tiles!

Create a romantic table for two by using Scrabble tile letters for place settings or a 'reserved' sign. Makes dining in feel more like dining out!

Karen McGuire, Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire



Sweet smell

For a simple, DIY car air freshener, just use essential oil and a clothes peg. Attach the peg to the vent, apply a few drops of oil and your car will smell sweet in no time.

Angela Clifton, Felixstowe



Tip of the Week

Holiday freshness

Keep your holiday clothes and shoes smelling fresh by stuffing your suitcase with tumble-dryer sheets!

Lee Hall, Sittingbourne, Kent



Flipping Great!

Simply jean-ius

Give plain flip-flops a chic and easy makeover - cut off the waistband from an old pair of jeans and attach to your sandals. The finished look is perfect for summer!

Fiona Ogunjimi, Barras Heath, Coventry



Top Mum's Tip!

Let the sunshine in!

Kids'll be thrilled to make their own sunflowers. Just cut the rims of paper plates to make petals, attach to sticks, then paint them to brighten the room.

Carol Loader, Taunton, Somerset



Perfect painting

When decorating, save time by wrapping your brush in clingfilm - not only will it stop the brush drying out, but you won't have to clean it every day!

Rose Janes, Monmouth



EDDIE BUDKA

'Why did you stop him, Mum

When she was just a little girl, Beth, 42, from London, was living with a sick secret. But then, so was her mother...

Since the moment I was born, I was Nana's little angel. 'She'd steal you if she could!' Mum would joke.

But she and Dad didn't mind really. I'd spend most weekends being spoilt rotten at Nana's and it gave them a break.

Nana would catch a bus from across London on a Friday and drop me off on Sunday night.

She loved baking, bought me dolls, took me to the zoo and on holidays.

Such a caring woman, it was no surprise when she agreed to take Eddie in.

Eddie was Dad's half-brother, Grandad's son from another relationship.

By 1980, Eddie was 15 and had landed on hard times.

I was 4 at the time and painfully shy, but Eddie seemed nice.

'I'm your uncle,' he winked, as I sat on Nana's sofa in my nightclothes one night. 'You look beautiful in your nightie.'

Nana cooked a huge roast dinner every week.

'Just popping to the shop,

Ed,' she shouted one Sunday. 'Watch Beth.'

'No problem,' he shouted back, flashing me a smile.

Minutes later, he was squashed up beside me, pulling my knickers down.

'What are you doing, Uncle Eddie?' I asked.

'It's OK,' he laughed, breathing heavily, putting his hands all over me.

Eventually, he stopped, went back to the armchair.

'Get dressed,' he said.

I felt frozen to the spot, but did as he said and just stared at the telly until Nana came back.

Then we all sat around the dinner table for Sunday lunch.

Like nothing had happened.

Weeks went on and I got used to Eddie's little 'cuddles', as he called them.

They'd happen every single time Nana went shopping.

I hated it. He hurt me and his breath smelt of cigarettes.

But I loved Nana and

my weekends with her.

One Friday after school in July 1983, when I was 6 and Eddie 18, he picked me up instead of Nana.

Instead of getting off at our usual bus stop, we got off a few stops early and Eddie led me into the stairwell of some flats.

Pulling my knickers down, he started rubbing himself against me.

I started to cry, feeling cold and scared.

'What's going on down there?' a man shouted from the top of the stairs.

Eddie grabbed my arm and dragged me back to the bus stop.

I thought it was normal, because no-one had told me any different.

'Eddie took my knickers off,' I blurted to Mum as she tucked me into bed that Sunday night.

'What do you mean?' Mum said, alarmed.

I panicked, didn't want her to be angry.

'Did you need a wee on

the way home?' she asked.

'Yes,' I fibbed.

She looked relieved.

'Night, love,' she said, kissing me on the forehead.

After that, I knew not to worry Mum again.

Besides, by now Eddie had started making threats.

'If you say a word about this, I'll kill your dog,' he warned.

There was nothing in the world I loved more than my collie-cross dog Charlie.

The thought of Eddie hurting her was enough to make sure I never breathed a word.

When Eddie's drinking got worse in October 1985, Nana threw him out.

'He is my brother, at the end of the day,' I overheard Dad say to Mum afterwards.

'He can kip on the sofa for a couple of nights,' she said reluctantly.

That night, Eddie crept into my bedroom.

As he got under the covers beside me, Charlie, who was sleeping on my bed, started barking her head off.

Mum ran in.

'What's going on...?' she cried, looking at Eddie, horrified.

Eddie jumped up.

'Nothing!' he spluttered. 'Get out, Eddie!' Mum cried, grabbing his arm and pulling him out of my room.

But less than an hour later, as

I hated it. He hurt me and his breath smelt of cigarettes

dn't p m?'

A young me, with my beloved dog



Only 4, I froze to the spot, stared back at the TV...

I drifted back to sleep, Eddie sneaked back.

Minutes later, Mum appeared again.

'Get the hell out!' she screamed, her voice shaking.

I sobbed as Eddie stormed downstairs and out of the door.

Then I heard Mum crying on the phone to Dad, who was working a night shift.

That was the last time I ever saw Eddie when I was a child.

But, by then, the damage had been done.

Eddie had been sexually abusing me for five years.

Dad was in denial, struggled to accept it, and Nana was

never told. Mum knew something had happened, but not the full extent. I refused to tell her.

When I turned 14, I started drinking and meeting boys, rebelling against everything. I felt so worthless and ashamed.

Me and Mum were at loggerheads. We rowed all the time and I turned my anger on her.

'Why didn't you stop him, Mum?' I cried.

'I didn't know,' she wept. I knew she felt guilty, but I was too messed up to care.

We both had this terrible secret – but instead of bringing us together, it tore us apart.

Then, when I was 24, in April 2000, Mum suffered a heart attack and died suddenly. She was only 50.

There was so much I wanted to say to her, I hated the thought

she'd blamed herself.

So much loss and hurt. Over the next few years, I tried to put the abuse behind me, block it out.

But it only took a certain song on the radio or a whiff of aftershave and I'd be right back in Nana's house being abused.

In November 2015, now a mum of two daughters and two boys, I was watching the soap *Hollyoaks*.

A teenage girl was being abused by a family member.

So much about the storyline struck a chord with me, I realised I had to speak out.

I walked straight into my local police station and told a female officer everything.

It felt like a weight had been lifted. I wasn't afraid of Eddie any more.

He was arrested, and I was devastated to discover there had been two more young victims, after me – in the 1990s.

'If only I'd spoken up sooner,' I told my solicitor.

Dad insisted on coming to

court every day during the trial last September, even though I begged him not to.

'It's better if you don't hear it,' I warned him.

As the horrifying details were read out at Blackfriars Crown Court, my whole family sat there in utter shock.

No-one knew how bad the abuse had been.

Dad broke down sobbing.

Eddie Budka, 53, was found guilty of 12 counts of indecent assault and one count of actual bodily harm. He was found not guilty of two counts of indecent assault.

He was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

I'm still angry, and I struggle with mental-health issues.

But my kids keep me strong.

I only wish Mum was still here to see our secret out in the open and justice finally done.

What Eddie did to me tormented her, too.

I hope that now he's been punished, she can rest in peace.

Your Deals of the week

We've done the research - so that you can save the **CASH**



SAVING OF THE WEEK

Under the sea

The Sea Creatures: Life Beneath The Ocean exhibition is a unique insight into the science and anatomy of sea creatures. Opening on 21 July in London, you can get 20% off tickets when you book now using code **PICKMEUP20** at eventbrite.co.uk



Full flavour

Coconut milk is a versatile ingredient that gives richness and flavour to so many dishes - try using it in a home-made Thai curry. And now Asda's Reduced Fat Coconut Milk has been rolled back to 89p (usually £1).



Hand care

Palmolive Liquid Handwash + Lotion is just £1 at Asda (save 99p) until 13 June. Available in-store and online at asda.com

Snack attack!

Arden's Gruyere & Spinach Twists are the perfect party snack.



They're made from flaky, buttery pastry, combined with smooth and mellow Gruyere cheese and spinach, before being baked to perfection. They're now £1.27 (usually £1.69) at Waitrose until 15 May.



Worth a look

Do you suffer from hay fever? Superdrug's eye-care products can help soothe the symptoms.

All items in the range are buy-one-get-a-second-half-price, until 22 May in stores nationwide and online at superdrug.co.uk

OFFER OF THE WEEK



Taste of summer

Lambrini Skinny is a light and bubbly alternative to prosecco that has only 29 calories per glass! You can enjoy it as it is, or use as a base for skinny summer cocktails. It's only £1.50 at Morrison's (usually £2) until 4 June.

OUR TOP TIP



Beat the allergens

Pick Me Up! readers can get 15% off HayMax allergen barrier balm (RRP £6.99) when quoting **PickMay15** at checkout. Visit haymax.biz.

Drink up!

Rude Health Almond Drink is a creamy, dairy-free milk, with a tasty, naturally nutty flavour. It works well in porridge and on cereals, or can be used in baking. It's now £1.60 (usually £2) at Asda, until 21 May.



Your Dilemmas

Can't make your mind up? Write to us at Pick Me Up! for good advice



Should I just confront my sister?

Sophia, 41,
Swindon

My younger sister and I have always been really close. Our lives are very different, she's the career girl, successful, and with an amazing man. I'm a single mum, but now my kids have flown the nest. We've never been competitive, though.

Two years ago, she got ovarian cancer and I stuck by her pretty much 24/7.

Thankfully, this year she got the all clear and has recovered fairly quickly but since then, she's a brand-new person.

She boasts about her job, her sex life, and how I'm stuck in dead-end jobs with kids who've left home. I'm so shocked at her personality shift! I know she's been through so much lately, but shall I talk to her about it?



YES

Pick Me Up!
reader Kerri Stevenson says,

'She has been through a lot, cancer can change someone's whole perspective on life. She most likely doesn't mean to hurt you, she sounds like she just wants the best for you.'

'You just need to explain that it hurts when she says things like that and that both your lives are different. Tell her you took different paths, but you're happy and surely that's all that matters.'

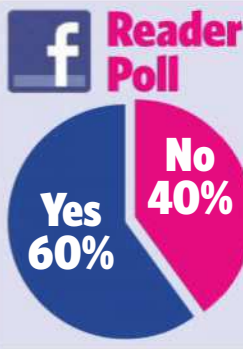


NO

Pick Me Up!
reader Joanne Burns says,

'Your sister has beaten cancer. Now she's appreciating everything she could've lost and no doubt she feels grateful and proud of herself.'

'There's no way I would chat with her about her boasting. Maybe you need to find out what's really bothering you and what you want out of your life. Be happy and achieve your dreams, then you can both boast together.'



Ask if he's cheating?

Janine, 37,
Manchester

For the past 18 months, I've been in a long-distance relationship with a man in America. I met him in the UK while he was travelling and we quickly fell in love.

Recently, I stalked his social media and I've noticed there's always one girl liking and commenting on his pictures – they go the same events and work together. I can't help but think he's cheating! I'm not due to visit him for another six weeks. Should I ask about her?



YES

Pick Me Up!
reader Nicola Green says,

'As it looks like he works with her, she genuinely could be just a friend. Why don't you casually bring her into a conversation? Perhaps about a picture you've seen of them on social media. You could even send her a friend request.'

'If you feel your relationship is going to work with so much distance between you, it must be worth fighting for. But remember, not all men cheat.'



NO

Pick Me Up!
reader Ann Johnson says,

'No, there's no need to mention her but you should have an honest talk about your relationship when you see him. Eighteen months is quite a long time and I don't think it's unreasonable to ask where he sees things going.'

'There's nothing wrong with him having female friends, especially if they're colleagues. But you need to decide if your long-distance relationship is good for you or your boyfriend.'

ADVICE LINES

● For support for people with cancer, call Macmillan on 0808 808 0000.

● If you're having an affair, or you think your partner is and you need some advice, call Relate on 0300 100 1234.

● To find out what your rights are if your relationship has broken down, or if you're having family problems, visit citizensadvice.org.uk/family.

Breaking the MAN BAN

She'd sworn off blokes for life. Could a face from the past tempt Louise Tennant, 57, from Coventry, to risk her heart?

Sitting in front of the telly, I picked up my iPad and started scrolling through Facebook. Since my kids, Ben, 33, and Becky, 27, had left home, the place had felt a lot quieter.

So it was nice to feel connected to them, even when they weren't around.

That said, I was more than happy with my own company.

It had been that way for 23 years, since the kids' dad and I split up.

Ben was 9 and Becky just 4 at the time.

Heartbroken, I'd sworn myself off men completely.

And from that moment on, my kids were my one and only priority.

Men, love, relationships? They didn't enter my head.

Only, that night in October 2016, a message suddenly appeared in my Facebook inbox.

Hi, remember me? It's Dave Evans from Gibraltar.

My jaw dropped. 'Blooming heck!' I squeaked, my heart pounding.

Talk about a blast from the past!

Of course I remember

you, I typed back quickly.

How could I forget?

Dave Evans was my first love.

We'd met in Gibraltar back in March 1981.

I was 20, on my first holiday with friends.

We were celebrating the end of our nursing exams in a bar one night when a tall, handsome stranger had approached me.

'Fancy a dance?' he'd said.

I was attracted to him immediately.

'Go on then!' I'd grinned, taking his hand.

After hitting the dance floor, we'd sat down for a chat.

Dave, then 25, had told me he was in the Army and was stationed out in Gibraltar for three months.

We'd talked for hours.

And before I knew it, the bar was closing.

For the rest of the holiday, Dave and I had become inseparable, but all too soon it had been time for me to return home.

Smitten, within eight weeks, in May 1981, I was flying back to Gibraltar, this

time without my friends.

Those next days had been so romantic, sharing bottles of wine and kisses in the sun.

Before long, Dave was back in the UK, stationed at a base in Maidstone, 140 miles away from my home in Coventry.

I'd hoped our romance would blossom, but our busy lives meant it had been hard for us to meet up.

In truth, we began drifting apart. So when Dave was stationed abroad again in April 1982, with no access to a phone, it seemed inevitable we'd lose touch.

It was sad, but I was so young – just 21 – and still working out what I wanted to do with my life.

And there was one thing I knew for certain – I didn't

Yes, that's us - in the early 1980s!



One thing I knew for certain - I didn't want to be an Army wife

want to be an Army wife.

So I'd moved on, and a few months after Dave had left, I met the father of my children.

We'd never married, but we were together for 10 years before it all went wrong.

And I'd been single ever since – I concentrated on my kids, volunteering as a foster carer and working as a teaching assistant for children with special needs.

So Dave's message had taken me by surprise.

Checking out his profile picture, I found myself smiling.

He looked older, of course. But he was still cute.

Firing messages back and forth, I discovered Dave worked on the Isle of Man as a taxi driver.

I've been wed and divorced

SECOND-CHANCE REAL LIFE



me another white wine. 'We did,' Dave agreed. For a moment, he fell silent...then he smiled, his green eyes twinkling.

'I still fancy you, you know,' he said. I felt my stomach turn to liquid.

It was now or never. 'Me too,' I said, blushing slightly. The night took a definitely flirty turn from then on.

Let's just say, come closing time, I knew Dave wouldn't be crashing in the spare room.

It's been 18 months now, and me and Dave are madly in love.

He's met all my family, and I've met his - even one of his ex-wives!

We all get on so well.

Dave still lives on the Isle of Man, and has asked me to move over there.

But my whole life is in Coventry, and I'd miss my children and grandchildren.

Right now, we spend two or three weeks together, then a month apart.

It keeps things exciting.

We speak on the phone every day and we're always hopping on planes for exotic getaways.

But this time it isn't just a holiday romance.

It's for keeps.

twice, he admitted.

So I told him about my break-up, the kids.

It was like no time had passed at all.

We swapped phone numbers and it wasn't long before we were chatting.

Then Dave announced that he was visiting family on the mainland the following week.

'I could pop round and see you,' he said.

I panicked.

Is he after some nostalgic fling?

Because I wasn't - not with him or anyone else.

Dave must have sensed my concern.

'I just want to have a cup of coffee and catch up,' he said. 'Then I'll find a hotel.'

So I agreed.

I felt sick with nerves when, a week later, Dave was standing on my doorstep.

He was still handsome, just

a little greyer around the edges.

'You look older,' I blurted.

'So do you!' he laughed.

Grabbing a coffee, we sat on the sofa.

'I got back in touch because I had a dream about you,'

Dave said.

I raised an eyebrow.

'Oh, really?' I said, wondering where this was going.

Dave started to laugh.

'OK, you were wearing your

nurse's uniform, but it was nothing dodgy!' he winked, flirtatious. 'And it just made me wonder what had ever happened to you.'

The rest of the day flew by in a whirl of chat and laughter.

I'd forgotten just how funny and sweet Dave was.

And damned sexy, too!

Not that I told him...

Soon it was pushing 11pm.

Too late for Dave to find a hotel.

'You can stay in the spare

room,' I said awkwardly.

Going to bed in the next room, I felt strange.

Half thrilled, half terrified.

There was no doubt I still fancied Dave.

Did he feel it too?

And if so, dare I do anything about it? I'd been so hurt in the past...

These questions were still whirling next morning when my daughter Becky came to visit with my two grandkids.

I thought Dave would scarper, but he stayed all day, chatting, helping out.

And that night, over a pub meal and drinks, I began to let down my defences.

Warmed by alcohol, we started reminiscing about our time in Gibraltar.

'We had so much fun,' I laughed as Dave poured

Dave was damned sexy... Not that I told him that!



Your Health

INSTANT appointment

With Doctor Arabella Onslow



that mean I'm safe until after my first period?
Alison, Kent

A No! You are at risk of pregnancy before menarche (your first period) and throughout the month, even if your periods are irregular. Always use contraception or you could get pregnant.

Acne treatment

Q I've always had bad acne on my face and back, but resisted antibiotic treatment as I was worried about taking them for a long time. However, it seems to be getting worse. Is there an alternative?
Hayley, Buckinghamshire

A A combination, topical, non-antibiotic treatment is now considered better than long-term oral antibiotic use, so see your GP to discuss that instead.

Fertility before periods

Q My boyfriend and I want to start having sex (we're virgins), but I'm late starting my periods (I'm just 16)... Does

Beating pain

Q I have chronic pain. I'm usually advised to increase painkillers, but I'm terrified of addiction so I take very little. I'm really suffering. Can I do anything?
Ann, Berkshire

A Addiction to strong painkillers (which don't work on chronic pain) is indeed easy. Psychotherapy techniques can help, and the Pain Toolkit website (pain toolkit.org) has more tips.



CONTACT US

For advice, contact us via one of the methods below. Letters and emails are selected randomly for publication. Sorry, Dr Onslow can't reply personally. **WRITE TO:** Pick Me Up!, 161 Marsh Wall, London E14 9AP. **E-MAIL:** pickmeup@timeinc.com

Health On Twitter Follow me @DrBellyButton



TRUE or FALSE

Trigeminal neuralgia

1 Trigeminal neuralgia is a slow-building pain in the neck.

True False

2 The attacks usually last for an hour.

True False

3 Attacks can be experienced regularly for a longer period of time.

True False

4 It is caused by compression on the trigeminal nerve.

1 FALSE It's a sudden, severe pain (often described as a shooting or stabbing pain) in the head, face, jaw, teeth or gums.

2 FALSE Generally, attacks are quick and unpredictable, often lasting a minute or so.

3 TRUE People with this condition may experience attacks for days, weeks or months at a time.

4 TRUE This is the nerve inside the skull that transmits sensations of pain and touch from your face, teeth and mouth to your brain.

OPE WID

Alice Woodcock, 19, from Ash, Surrey, was chatting away during surgery!

With just a week until my 18th birthday, I was so excited.

I couldn't wait to go to out and celebrate with my mates.

On 13 July 2016, I was just home from the gym when my mum Lesley, 47, walked in.

'What do you want for dinner?' She asked.

'I don't mind,' I said, or so I thought.

Mum looked confused.

I tried to repeat myself, but only slurred gibberish was coming out.

What's going on?

That's when Mum noticed that the right side of my face had fallen.

Suddenly, I felt my entire right side droop, and I couldn't lift my arm or walk.

Terrified, Mum yelled for my dad Brian, 49, who came

40%

of adults are now so physically inactive that they are actually putting their health at risk, according to Puresentiel. Better get moving!

OPERATION AWAKE

running upstairs.

Within five minutes, an ambulance arrived to take me to Frimley Park Hospital.

Shaking, vomiting, and constantly passing out, I was in a really bad way.

'Stay with us love,' Mum said, clutching my hand.

Doctors found two blood clots in my brain, so I was given an injection to break them up.

But it didn't work.

Telling my parents I'd had a stroke, the doctor said I'd need surgery at St George's Hospital.

It was a pioneering procedure called a thrombectomy, where surgeons remove blood clots from the body directly.

In and out of consciousness,

I tried to take it all in.

'A stroke?' I thought. 'But I'm only 17!'

Blue-lighted to St George's, I was taken straight in for the 45-minute op.

Medics numbed me, but I was awake for the procedure.

There was no time to completely put me out.

They needed to make sure I was responding, too.

Suddenly, I felt a weird sensation.

I could feel them pulling the clots out of my head!

It was strange, as the second the clots were removed it felt like a weight was lifted.

'Are you OK, Alice?' asked the surgeon.

'I'm OK,' I gasped, shocked that my voice had returned.

Mum and Dad were so relieved and came in the next morning showering me with hugs and kisses.

'We were so worried,' said Dad, holding my hand.

After the op, I could barely walk or move – everything felt so heavy.

I actually had to lift my leg with my arms to take a step.

I was discharged after a few days, and continued my

It was strange to feel them pulling the clots out of my head



Now - giving back to charity

physio back at home.

Only then did it hit me. *I'd survived a stroke!*

I never thought young people could suffer strokes, only older ones.

My 18th birthday came and went, and I was lucky to see it.

But I panicked I'd never be able to go to the gym again.

I was so energetic before, now I could barely lift a fork!

The stroke was caused by my contraceptive pill apparently.

While safe for most women, tests also showed that I had

a patent foramen ovale, a flap in my heart that makes it easier for blood to clot.

Last November, I had surgery to close the flap on my heart.

After two years, I'm finally getting back to my old self.

In April, I took part in a 5k run to raise money for the Stroke Association charity.

Their support was amazing when I was ill.

Now I want other young people know that strokes can affect them, too.



Feeling better after my op

FACT FILE

A stroke is a medical emergency that occurs when the brain's blood supply is cut off. The sooner treatment can be given, the less damage is likely to remain. Common signs are a drooping face, numb arms, and garbled speech. The symptoms can be remembered with the acronym FAST: Face, Arms, Speech, Time to call an ambulance. Visit stroke.org.uk for more information.

Men's health

With Dr Arabella Onslow



Q I've had piles for years and my wife keeps nagging me to get them operated on.

Would I be better off having the surgery?

Liam, Lincolnshire

A Recent evidence favours non-surgical management, so it's best to reduce your daily straining time (no more than 3-5 minutes) and aim for one easy-to-pass stool per day.

Give yourself a lift

Cinnamon

Once traded as currency, this household spice is frequently used in Chinese herbal medicine as it has been found to have medicinal and soothing effects.

The essential oil found in cinnamon bark is cinnamaldehyde, which displays antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal properties, so add it to your morning porridge for an extra boost.



DEVILS IN DISGUISE

These criminals cross-dressed to escape justice

BRAZIL: HELL ON HIGH HEELS

Following a botched, armed prison escape attempt, Brazilian drug trafficker Ronaldo Silva was transferred to a new prison in Penedo.

But serving time was clearly a drag for this convict.

In early 2012, he made another, more bizarre, bid for freedom.

During a prison visit, 39-year-old Silva managed to swap clothes with his wife.

Mrs Silva left the jail wearing her husband's T-shirt and shorts – and later told the police that she had no idea why hubby Ronaldo had demanded the trade.

As it turned out, Silva had been nursing a new escape plan for some time.

He'd shaved his arms and legs, and acquired a long, black wig.

Now, donning his wife's blue dress, white bra, lipstick and heels, Silva was ready to make a break for it.

Incredibly, he managed to slip past the guards and right out of the prison!

Half an hour later, Silva was roaming the streets of Penedo, still dressed as a woman.

Unfortunately for him, he'd underestimated just how difficult it can be to walk in high heels.

Especially heels that don't fit.

The feckless felon's feet must've been troubling him, because his odd walk soon caught the attention of



Silva - his dress did not impress

a local patrol officer.

The officer stopped Silva as he stumbled unsteadily towards a bus stop. He was rearrested and taken back to jail, still sporting his outfit.

That's when prison officials realised how much thought he'd

put into the attempt – even going to the trouble of applying lipstick and painting his nails along with the leg shaving.

'He'd spent a long time preparing,' said the jail director after Silva's recapture.

HONDURA

As visitors were ushered out through checkpoints at Honduras' San Pedro Sula maximum-security prison, two guards at the final gate noticed something odd about one.

A strawberry-blonde woman in sunglasses and a long skirt

CANADA:

Canadian Shafer Bano Shahdady tied the knot with husband Abdul Malik Rustam in an arranged marriage in Pakistan in 2007.

Falling pregnant soon after, she returned to Canada to raise their son, while Rustam eventually joined them two years later.

But, during those two years, the couple had grown apart.

Rustam was jealous and controlling, and they constantly argued over Shafer's use of a mobile phone and the Internet.

By May 2011, tensions had become so great that Shafer, 21, told her husband she wanted a divorce.

Rustam, 30, repeatedly



Argueta - that's no lady!



WORLD OF CRIME



His slightly less glamorous mugshots

a desperate dash for freedom. His face was caked in blusher and he'd even given himself some fake boobs! "The make-up couldn't hide the fact that he was a man," a police spokesman said. Amazingly, Argueta had made it through several security checkpoints, trying to blend in with the other departing visitors. If the guards hadn't picked up on Argueta's odd

S: DRESSED TO KILL?

looked, well, a little ugly! Manly, even, you might say. The guards approached the woman, and were surprised to hear quite a gruff, deep voice answering their questions. Smelling a rat, they asked the suspect to remove her glasses and, to their shock,

they realised the 'woman' was actually one of their inmates in drag! The man was gang leader Francisco Herrera Argueta, who'd been imprisoned for murder and firearm offences in September 2015. At some point, it seems the

notorious gangster, also known as Don Chico, had found an identity card belonging to one of the other inmate's visiting family members, and had seen an opportunity to make a daring escape. Somehow, from prison, Argueta had sourced women's clothes and attempted

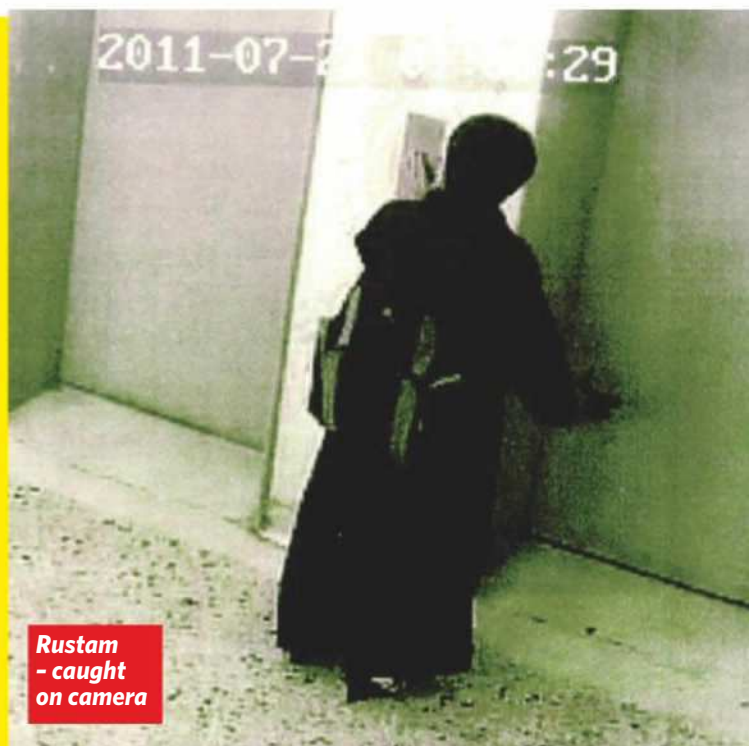
disguise, a dangerous killer would've been on the loose. Together with his murder and gun offences, Argueta now faces further punishment for his escape attempt. Officials have considered transferring him to El Pozo prison, a facility for the country's most dangerous criminals.

DEADLY COVER-UP...

tried to convince her to reconsider, but it was no use. In early July, Shaher moved out of the family home into her own apartment, with their son. But her new life would be cut tragically short. At 1am on 22 July, a woman in a black burka and wedge heels was caught on camera entering the apartment block. But it wasn't a woman - it was Rustam in disguise. Shortly after arriving at Shaher's door, Rustam viciously strangled her to death. Rustam then made his way out, leaving his 2-year-old son

alone with Shaher's lifeless body for 15 hours. The crime was eventually discovered by Shaher's parents, and Rustam turned himself in. Rustam pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in February 2014. Justice John McMahon told the Ontario Superior Court of Justice that Rustam had shown 'planning and forethought' by shielding his identity with a full burka. 'You denied your own child the love of his mother,' he said. Rustam was sentenced to life with no parole for 17 years.

He was jealous, controlling, and they constantly argued



Rustam - caught on camera

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Genius Or TOTALLY BONKERS?

We put some truly original products to the test...



Aqua Carpativa, 65p, Ocado

If you thought water was just water, think again! Designed for the health conscious, this water has the lowest sodium level of any bottled mineral water and is said to be the silkiest H2O on Earth!

Verdict:
UNDECIDED!

Sounds bonkers but good for health-food lovers and pregnant women.

Aerobull Speaker in Gloss Red, £1,349.99, firebox.com

Fancier than your average speaker, this French bulldog-shaped gadget boasts wireless music streaming, a bone-shaped remote and seriously powerful speakers.



Verdict:
BONKERS!

We can't believe the price!

Kippy Vita, from £55, Vodafone

Keep an eye on pets, even when they're out of sight, with this GPS tracker that fits on their collar. Using a SIM, it tracks how long they've spent sleeping and playing, as well as giving you their location.



Verdict:
GENIUS!

Great for cats or dogs.

WIN PUZZLE 3 £300!

Crack it!

Work out which letter each number represents. Once you've filled the grid, put the correct letters into the Prize Answer boxes at the bottom to spell out a word. **Enter on page 45.**

8	10	1	8	21		21	1	19	17	9		19	
17		25		13		5		20		8	19	20	10
21	19	3	1	14	23	8	10	4		14		7	
25		4		7		1		8	3	17	25	8	26
20	14	1		10	8	9	4	17				23	
		14		4		4		20	8	9	18	14	20
21	5	8	20	26	8	1		4		17		1	
	25		19				14	26	14	25	10	14	5
4	23	9	17	4	21	21				15		8	
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3	19	17	4	8	19		13		4		23		
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A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

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PRIZE ANSWER

21	25	23	4	25	20	4
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Your telly Pick of the week

You definitely won't want to miss these TV treats



Eurovision Song Contest 2018, BBC1

The final of the Eurovision Song Contest is broadcast live from Lisbon in Portugal on Saturday 12 May. UK singer SuRie hopes to deliver a victory for the first time in 21 years with her catchy anthem *Storm*.

'I have a good feeling about this year,' says the 29-year-old. 'I'm just going to focus on my

performance, doing myself proud and hopefully that will translate into making everyone else proud.'

The witty commentary on all the countries' performers comes again courtesy of Graham Norton while, this year, Mel Giedroyc has the special role of announcing the UK's televote result live from London on the big night.

The BAFTA Television Awards, BBC1

The ceremony from London's Royal Festival Hall is presented by Sue Perkins. A big battle will see *Line of Duty* take on *The Crown*, *The End of the F***** World* and *Peaky Blinders* for the Drama Award. Plus the shock nominations include Channel 5 series *Cruising with Jane McDonald*.



Humans, C4

Synths Mia and Niska (above) and Max continue to battle for their right to survival. And human family Joe, Laura and the kids come to terms with the events of the last series. Colin Morgan is back as Leo and Mark Bonnar joins the cast as Neil Somner, a government scientist.



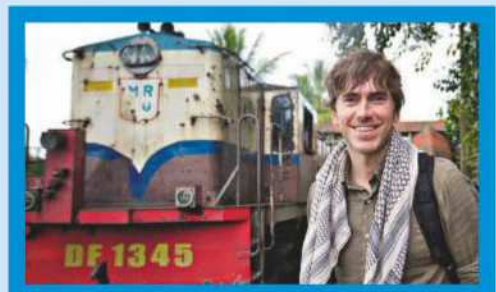
Bulletproof, Sky1

Ashley Walters (left) stars in this new crime series, playing cop Pike, whose dad was the first black police commissioner, while his best mate and police partner Bishop (Noel Clarke) grew up in a series of foster homes. But their lifelong friendship becomes tested when ghosts from the past emerge...

Innocent, ITV

When David (Lee Ingleby) is acquitted of killing wife Tara on a technicality after serving seven years in prison, it

has devastating consequences for Tara's sister Alice (Hermione Norris), and Tara and David's children. But what did happen on the night of Tara's murder? DCI William Beech (Nigel Lindsay) is back on the case. This four-parter will show across the week.



Burma With Simon Reeve, BBC2

Simon Reeve travels to beautiful and troubled Burma, also called Myanmar, for a new two-part series. On his journey, Simon discovers a divided country - where life is steadily improving for many, while others live in terror of the military who still have enormous power in the country.

WORDS: NICK CANNON

PHOTOS: JODAVIDSON/SHM/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK; @SKY UK LTD; BBC; C4; ITV; BBC/JONATHAN YOUNG

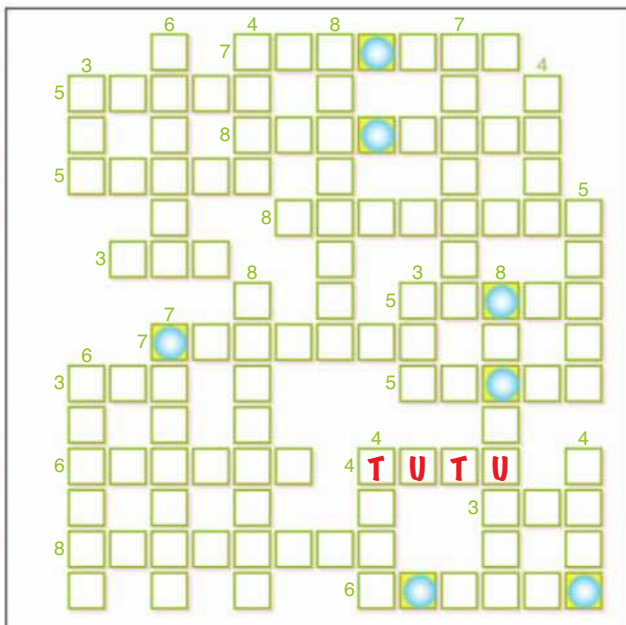
WIN
PUZZLE 4

£25!

Cross it!

Solve the puzzle to find a word. Fit the words back in the grid and the letters in the highlighted squares spell out the answer. We've put in one word to help.

Enter on page 45.



- | | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 3 letters | Aria | Krill | Sleepy | 8 letters |
| Ado | Cede | Oriel | Swotty | Gyrotary |
| Dye | Deli | Pitta | 7 letters | Immobile |
| Ice | Tutu | Rower | Apprise | Peacenik |
| Rep | Twee | 6 letters | Stipend | Pimiento |
| Sir | 5 letters | Enzyme | Thyroid | Polarise |
| 4 letters | Aduki | Equity | Trouble | Ubiquity |

WIN
PUZZLE 5

£25!

Sudoku!

To solve the puzzle, each 3 x 2 box, each column and each row must contain the numbers 1 to 6. Solve the puzzle, then read down the numbers in the highlighted squares for the prize answer.

Enter on page 45.

		6	1	4	3
	5		3		
		1		6	
4	6	2	5		

Defying my dear sentence

She was given six months to live. But 26 years later, Lyn Parent, 57, from Auckland, New Zealand, is still here!

As I walked into the tattoo parlour with my sister Hayley, 21, the buzz of the needles excited me. It was July 1992 and Hayley wanted a rosebud inked on her hip.

Aged 31, her older sister, I'd gone along for moral support.

But as she chatted to the tattoo artist, I admired a butterfly design on the wall.

'What would you think if I got a tattoo on my hip as well?' I asked Hayley, feeling spontaneous.

'Really?' she asked.

Grimacing, I jumped into the chair.

'I'm the oldest, so I'll go first,' I winked.

As the tattooist inked my right hip, it felt very painful and bled a bit.

Once it was finished, I saw him change the needle before starting Hayley's design.

Admiring my tat in the mirror, I was chuffed to bits.

Hayley loved hers, too.

A few days later, I went to Corsica, where I worked as a tour guide.

But eight weeks on, I developed a high temperature,

couldn't eat and felt really run down.

I felt so awful, I flew home.

Doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with me, tested me for all sorts – including HIV.

I wasn't worried. Back then, I thought it mainly affected men.

The following day, in October 1992, I returned to hospital for my results.

The nurse didn't mince her words.

'I'm afraid you've got HIV, which has developed into AIDS,' she said, explaining it's a virus that attacks the immune system, destroying it.

The whole room seemed to spin.

Back then, AIDS was considered a death sentence.

'You've got six months to live,' the nurse said bluntly.

As I broke down, my mum, who'd come with me to the appointment, didn't know what to say or do.

'Can I hug her?' she asked the nurse.

I didn't blame her for being so unsure.

Back then, we were all naive about how the virus

**th
ce**



This little butterfly changed my life forever...

happened eight weeks before I fell ill in France.

'The tattoo,' I realised.

I couldn't recall the tattoo artist changing the needle before inking me.

'It must've been a dirty needle,' I gasped.

I felt so angry and upset.

That tattoo had been a spur-of-the-moment thing.

But a split-second decision had changed my life.

'I should never have had it done,' I sobbed to Hayley.

I couldn't torture myself forever, though.

Over the years, more research was done into HIV.

And the myths surrounding it slowly began to disperse.

I learned that taking antiretroviral drugs every day can help suppress the virus.

I wanted to help break misconceptions about the disease.

So in 2000 I started a fashion event called StyleAid to raise money for women and children with HIV.

And every year since, it's got bigger and bigger.

Today, at 57, I feel fit and well and take three tablets a day to keep my HIV at bay.

It's crazy that 26 years ago, I thought I only had months left to live.

Yet here I am!

I'm proof that HIV isn't the death sentence it used to be.

I still have my tattoo.

But rather than look at it with anger, it's a reminder of just how lucky I am.

could be transmitted.

The nurse said it was usually transmitted through sex.

But who'd given it to me?

While I struggled to come to terms with everything, Mum phoned all of my ex-partners and told them to get tested.

I visited all my old friends, told them I was dying.

The strange thing was, though I'd been given a death sentence, I felt healthy.

I wasn't taking any meds.

I had no idea what effect the disease would have on my body, and doctors seemed unsure, too.

'Maybe one day I'll just drop down dead,' I thought.

Or go to

bed one night and never wake up again.

It was scary.

But six months after the diagnosis, I still felt healthy.

Soon a year had passed, then two years...

In time, I met someone – and in 1996, I fell pregnant.

My husband knew all about my condition but because I didn't feel ill, we just had sex.

My husband was given the all-clear.

But... 'What if I pass my HIV onto the baby?' I panicked.

As a precaution, doctors gave me antiretroviral drugs a week before my

planned Caesarean.

'Your baby will need to take them for six weeks after, and you won't be able to breastfeed,' I was told.

But all that mattered was that my baby was OK.

Thankfully, when Francois arrived in February 1997, he didn't develop HIV.

When his sister Amira arrived in May 2000, she was fine, too.

'I've been blessed,' I thought.

By now, I'd learnt to live with my diagnosis and simply accepted that my time was limited.

But I still had no idea how I'd contracted HIV.

None of my ex-partners had come forward to say they also had it – it was just me.

So in 1998, I went to see a specialist.

'It takes eight weeks for the disease to attack the white blood cells,' he said.

Looking at a calendar, we traced back to what had

I visited all my old friends, told them I was dying



I was 31 when I got the diagnosis

HAYLEY/IS NOT HER REAL NAME; WORDS: RIAH MATTHEWS; PHOTOS: AMANDA BRANSGROVE; MEDAVIA

Your style



£18,
Peacocks



£25,
Dorothy Perkins

£25,
Lipsy



£30,
Amelia Rose
at Asos

**PickMeUp!
Loves...**
A beaded clutch! This pretty bag is well worth investing in for wedding season.



£25,
Peacocks



**Dress, £45,
heels, £25,**
Dorothy Perkins,
earrings,
model's own



£30,
nastygal.com



£22.99,
New Look



£15,
Primark



**£9.50
for set,**
Oliver Bonas

£29.50,
M&S

COMPILED BY: JESS BEECH

This week...

Wedding guest outfits



£28,
Peacocks



£20,
Tu Clothing at
Sainsbury's



£19.50,
M&S



£38,
Glamorous
at Very



£45,
Very



£32,
Evans



£24,
lasula.co.uk



£14.99,
British Heart
Foundation



£30,
Accessorize



£14,
George at
Asda

**Pick Me Up!
Loves...**
Pastel pink. It's particularly flattering on paler skin tones.

Daddy's girl

FOREVER

Her dad was brutally killed, but Alarna Wye, 21, from Birmingham, still has something she needs to tell him...

Dad, in my favourite memory of you, you're doing your Mick Jagger strut across the stage at a Haven holiday park in Devon.

I can still feel my cheeks flush as you stuck out your lips and started belting out (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction*.

But when you'd started rocking out on your air guitar, I'd convulsed with laughter.

You may have been embarrassing, Dad, but I secretly wanted to join in.

I was only young then, maybe 12 or 13.

But unlike others my age, I loved spending time with my funny old pops.

Even if you did make me cringe at times.

We had so much fun.

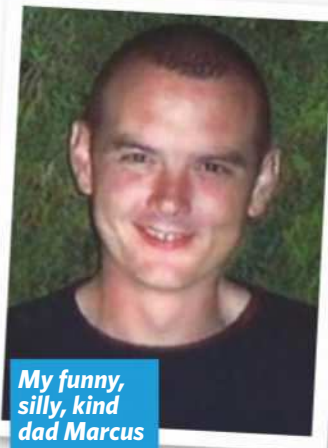
Not just on holiday... We'd play by the canal, take a picnic down there.

Or - and I'm probably embarrassing you, now - remember our pampers sessions together?

We'd do face masks and you'd help me with my nails.

'Don't tell your mum,' you'd say as you brushed on another layer of bright-pink varnish.

You and Mum had split up



My funny, silly, kind dad Marcus

when I was about 7.

Living with Mum most of the time, I could tell you missed me.

And I missed you, too.

So we made the time we had together count.

Every school sports day or parents' evening, you were always there.

You never once let me down.

When I'd come round to yours, you'd be sitting on the floor with your legs crossed in some weird yoga position.

That always made me laugh.

Or you'd have your head in a 500-page history book on some war I'd never heard of, hundreds of years ago.

'You're so much like your

Dad,' our friends and family would comment.

Both stubborn, considerate of others and sociable.

I loved it when people said that.

There was still so much I wanted to know about you, though.

And I thought we had all the time in the world.

But on 5 April 2012, that time was ripped away.

I was in a deep sleep when I was awoken by the sound of banging on our front door.

Rubbing my eyes, I turned to see the clock. 3am.

Who's coming round at this time? I thought.

Stumbling out of bed, I heard the door open.

Must be Mum, I thought.

Then I heard two voices I didn't recognise.

Muffled talking downstairs.

'I'm sorry,' I eventually heard them say.

Suddenly our home was filled with screams, a high-pitched wailing I knew was my mum's.

Dad, I was so scared then. I knew something bad

must have happened.

But I never thought it would've been about you.

Tip-toeing down the stairs, in my pyjamas, my heart thumped in my chest.

I spotted the two police officers first.

Then saw my mum crumpled in a ball on the sofa, sobbing quietly now.

Looking up at me as I came into the room, her wails became louder.

'I'm so sorry, so sorry, Alarna - it's your dad,' she mumbled, trying to pull herself together.

'Why don't you sit down?'

said one of the officers to me.

Terrified, I did as she said and perched on the end of the sofa.

'I'm afraid your dad has been stabbed, and I'm sorry to tell you he didn't make it,' the

officer explained.

My eyes widened.

I felt sick rise in my throat.

Everything around me seemed to blur.

Am I dreaming?

Will I soon wake up from this nightmare?

I prayed you would jump out and it would be another one of your mischievous jokes.

The next few days, I sat in my room in silence.

Didn't eat, didn't sleep, didn't talk to anyone.

The only person I wanted to speak to was the one person I couldn't - you.

After a week hiding away

Suddenly our home was filled with my mum's screams

R

That special photo - the only one I have of us together...



With my boy Frankie - he has his grandad's eyes



from the world, Mum took me to the doctor's.

'She's in shock,' he told us. We walked back home like zombies and I was back in my room for days on end.

I know you would've told me to go, but I couldn't face school. As the days went on, what'd happened to you started to come to light.

Luke Ayres, a man who was dating your partner's daughter, was your killer.

I'd met him a few times round yours.

Knew he was bad news. I just remember him drinking and smoking in the kitchen, swearing like a trooper.

It turned out he'd come round to your place after an argument with his girlfriend.

Ever protective, you wouldn't let him into the house.

You'd ended up having a row with him.

Things had escalated.

Then he'd stabbed you to death.

He knifed you eight times, including a fatal blow which pierced your heart.

I can't imagine what you would've gone through as you

lay there in the stairwell.

Were you in pain?

Did you think about me?

I hoped that last bit was true.

I hoped with all my heart that the happy memories we'd shared together offered you some sort of comfort during your final breaths.

Ayres was arrested almost straight away.

Charged with your murder.

I was glad, but at the time I had other priorities - I was determined to give you the best send-off, Dad.

Hundreds of people came to pay their respects at your funeral.

Testament to how popular and loved you were.

We played your favourite Rolling Stones song as the coffin was brought in.

Were you listening, Dad?

Was it what you wanted?

The following year, I went along to Birmingham Crown Court when Ayres, 21, was in the dock.

I felt sick just looking at him.

In October 2013, he admitted manslaughter on the

grounds of diminished responsibility.

He was found to have mental-health issues. Was sentenced to life in prison with an indeterminate sentence.

I felt justice had been served.

I hope you did, too.

Losing you made me grow up fast.

Don't be angry, but I never really went back to school after what happened to you.

I couldn't face the stares and remarks - being known as the girl whose dad was killed.

But I still got my GCSEs - even a couple of A grades.

I really hope that makes you proud.

I can't believe it, but it's been six years since we last spoke.

I'm 21 now, and you're a grandad!

I had Frankie about a year ago - he's got your eyes.

I tell him about you all the time.

And Dad, I've got news - I'm

We played your favourite Stones song. Were you listening..?

pregnant with my second!

There's a picture of us together that I treasure.

Me as a baby, protected in your arms.

You look young, a bit scared!

A parent now myself, I know how you felt.

Overwhelmed by love, scared that you'll do something wrong.

But I promise, you never did.

I wish there could be a photo of you holding my babies.

With grey hair, wrinkles, older and wiser.

It breaks my heart that can never happen.

All I can do is make sure your memory lives on.

When they're older, I'll tell my kids all our stories.

I know they'd have loved their silly, loving, sappy grandpa.

Just like I'll always love my brilliant dad.

**HELLO
BABY!**



Celebrate your new arrival and get **£25 CASH**



Bubble buddy

My four-month-old son Charlie is a proper water baby. He loves to make a splash at bath time. *Faye Pattinson, Newcastle upon Tyne*



Hey, Buzz!

In their onesies and with their own Slinky dog, my grandsons Flynn and Tommy, both 3 months, make their own *Toy Story!* *Debbie McGuire, via e-mail*



Little cub

Fleur, 2 months, wasn't too sure about the hood I put on her... But she's un-bear-ably cute! *Donna Gray, Billingham*

'Who'd w sex with

She should be in her prime, but her bed is a man-free zone. Paula Lynn, 38, from Belfast, shares what went wrong

Arms in the air, I lost myself in the thumping dance music. 'This was a great idea,' I grinned to my mate Aileen, 39.

Newly single, I'd needed cheering up. So Aileen had dragged me out clubbing.

At the end of the song, we pushed our way through the throngs of clubbers to the bar. 'Strawberry daiquiri, please,' I said.

Knocking it back, it was delicious.

Only, a minute later, a familiar feeling set in.

'Hold this,' I spluttered, shoving my glass in Aileen's hand.

Then frantically began battling my way through the crowds...

With every step I took, panic was rising.

Please let me get there in time!

But it was too late. Just feet from the ladies' toilet, it happened.

Racing into the bathroom, a trail of liquid followed behind me.

My cheeks burned as other women stared.

They knew what I'd done. Hurling into a cubicle, I locked the door.

'My God, she's just wet

herself,' someone hissed. Tears streamed down my face.

I was mortified.

Cleaning myself up, I took a deep breath before walking out with my head bowed to find Aileen.

'I need to go,' I said as I found her on the dance floor.

'Don't be silly. We've just arrived,' she replied.

'I've had an accident,' I explained, gesturing to the wet patch on my leggings.

She put her arm around me and called a taxi.

Sobbing all the way home, with Aileen holding my hand sympathetically, I was totally humiliated.

And it wasn't the first time I'd felt like this.

I'd suffered from a weak bladder my entire life, caused by repeated kidney infections as a child.

It had only got worse when I had Dylan in 1997, aged 18.

My first accident had happened in a supermarket queue, with Dylan sitting in the trolley.

Suddenly I'd felt something warm trickling down my leg.

I was horrified.

After that, I tried everything to find a solution.

Incontinence pads,

pelvic-floor exercises...but nothing helped.

I even tried sessions of acupuncture.

My confidence at rock bottom, cracks began to appear in my relationship.

I split with my partner just weeks after our daughter Morgan was born in April 2003.

Nights out with my friends became few and far between.

My weak bladder ruined any fun I was having.

Eventually, in 2011, I was referred by my doctor to a specialist at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital.

They suggested I had

**Wow!
I felt like
all my
prayers
had been
answered**



With my kids Dylan and Morgan

Want

ME?!



My idea of date-night now



I should be out, enjoying life...

something called a TVTO vaginal-mesh implant. It's like a little hammock that goes under your bladder and holds everything in place,' explained the consultant. And she said that the procedure would take just 20 minutes. 'You will never wet yourself again,' she added. Wow! I felt like all my prayers had been answered. On 29 October 2011, I was wheeled into theatre, full of optimism. In just 20 minutes, I would get my life back. Only, when I came round from the anaesthetic, I couldn't move my legs. Panicking, I asked a nurse what was happening. 'Don't worry. You'll feel sore

for a few weeks,' she said. Feeling reassured, I went home five days later, and waited for the pain to cease. But it got worse. Cramps, similar to period pains, throbbed all around my stomach and pulsed up my legs. *Is this normal?* Taking time off from my job as a civil servant, I hoped this pain would be worth it. But the following week, lying on the sofa, I felt an all-too-familiar sensation. Within seconds, my pyjamas were drenched through. So much for the promise of never wetting myself again. All the GP could give me was painkillers. Passed from one specialist to another, the next few years

were a nightmare. My pain was put down to fibromyalgia or IBS. I was in despair. No-one could explain why my op seemed to have brought on these conditions. And worse, no-one could offer a cure. Terrified of wetting myself in public, and in constant pain, I hardly ever went out. Steadily grew more isolated and depressed. Then, in 2016, I spotted a news report about a group of women who were campaigning to have their vaginal mesh operations reversed. The article listed the symptoms. *Incontinence, constant pain...* It was a light-bulb moment – it was everything I was dealing with. Cooking a family meal for Morgan, 15, and Dylan, 20, or even washing up, was a struggle, as I couldn't stand for

too long due to the pain. Joining the Facebook group Sling the Mesh, it was a comfort to hear, at last, that I wasn't alone. In fact, there are thousands of women like me. I'm now on a waiting list for a procedure to remove the mesh implant. But I've been told it'll be nine months before I'm seen by a consultant. While I wait, I suffer every single day. I've been signed off my job, I'm virtually housebound, and as for dating, you must be joking. Still in my 30s, I should be in my sexual prime – but who'd want to have sex with me?! A woman who wees herself all the time. Anyway, sex is too agonising. I haven't had it in seven years because of the pain. This is my warning to other women thinking of having the vaginal-mesh implant. Don't do it. Mine has ruined my life.

This is my warning to other women... Don't do it!

Animal magic

Show us what your pets are up to and get **£25 CASH**



My lovely budgies - Arthur and Pearl - are always causing mischief!
Lianne Michael, Cimla, Neath

Compare the Meerkat... Meet Kofi, my little fuzzy friend who loves his cuddles.
Ellen Blackah, Lincoln



Please sir, can I have some more? We should have called Omega 'Oliver' as he waits for seconds!
Colleen Brunton, Enfield



Finally, I'm top dog!

This is my stairway to heaven, passing Bonnie, Lupa, Oscar and Midge - my best friends!
F Whittle, via e-mail

I'm no green-eyed monster

Iguana introduce you to Hulk. But don't worry, he's lovely - you'd like him all the time and he never gets angry!
Ann Knox, South Ayrshire

Milly loves staring at her reaction... Such a pretty kitty!
Pamela Boles, Cardiff

Looking purrfect, girl!



Pick Me Up! Bingo

I woke up one day to

A £1,000

WIN!

These members couldn't believe their eyes when they won big...

When Andrea Hamilton, 44, from Hartlepool, won, her family got spoilt rotten - even the dogs!



TIKI BINGO ANDREA'S WINNING GAME!

Andrea played and won her FULL HOUSE jackpot playing a 90-ball bingo game in our Tiki room. Numbers are called between 1-90, and if you have a called number, it will automatically be dabbed off for you. In each game you can win on one line, two lines or a full house - and if your full house is called first, you'll win the top cash prize, just like Andrea did!

It was November 2017 and the house was chaos. Being a mum of two kids, Charlotte, 13, and Harry,

10, was madness.

And I had just as many dogs.

So I use any me-time I get to chill out and relax.

One of the things I like to do is play *Pick Me Up!* Bingo.

I'd been a member for over three years and had some small wins.

A win in November 2016 playing 90-ball Bingo in the

Emerald Bingo room went to buy my West Highland terrier pup, Charlie.

This time, I'd

bought

38

10p

tickets for the Link game in the Emerald room.

Yawning, I left the game running and headed up to bed.

The next morning, I checked what had happened overnight. Maybe I was seeing things...

I'd won the Link Full House of £1,000!

I was a winner!

I quickly snapped a picture of my account, and sent it to my partner Shaun, 58.

You've done it again! he texted me back.

I told everyone at work and they were so happy for me.

They thought I'd buy another dog to join Charlie and my German Shepherd Rio.

Not a chance!

My house was

already mad as a box of frogs...

I couldn't believe it when all those winnings appeared in my bank account.

Football-mad Harry got lots of footie treats.

Charlotte raked in the presents, too.

And the dogs! They were showered with doggie treats.

As for me, I just loved seeing my family happy.

I have to say thank you to *Pick Me Up!* Bingo.

All the family have enjoyed my big win.

Everyone at work thought I'd buy another dog

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18+ UK only. Registration, opt in and wager required. Rules apply. BeGambleAware.org

Pick Me Up! Bingo

My shock at seeing

JACKPOT

Alexandra scooped £4,766 and couldn't wait to treat her loved ones!

I bought loads of toys for the grandkids



Alexandra Greatbatch, 48, Stoke-on-Trent

It was the weekend, and it was lovely for my hubby Peter, 50, and me to have some time to ourselves. I smiled at him, busy on his tablet.

'Morning, love,' he beamed back, kissing me fondly on the cheek.

It was a Sunday morning last November, and we had decided to play a few games of bingo.

We'd both been members of *Pick Me Up!* Bingo for two months.

'Have you started playing the Bingo yet?' I asked him, looking around for my glasses.

He was in the Emerald Bingo room, which we usually play together.

We love to have a bit of

friendly banter with each other!

I couldn't find my reading glasses, but could still pretty much read the numbers on my tablet.

I checked the balance in my account, making plans to spend £2 on the next Emerald Bingo game.

I bought the tickets, which were 2p each, and began to watch the numbers pop out on the screen as they were called.

'Are you winning?' Peter joked.

Some of my numbers were called, which then disappeared from my Bingo card.

After a few minutes I noticed

I only had two numbers left.

'You might win!' Peter

Finding my glasses at last, I read the huge sum on the screen

grinned, winking.

I just scoffed and didn't take any notice.

Then, as I watched, one more number disappeared. 'Only one left!' I laughed. Then suddenly, it was gone. Numbers flashed up on my screen, but I wasn't sure that I was really reading them properly.

I was scrambling for my glasses when Peter gasped. 'You've won!' he cried in amazement.

'No, I haven't...' I replied, finding my specs at last.

Putting them on, I could

finally read the huge sum that now flashed on my screen.

I'd won the progressive jackpot of £4,766!

Was I just seeing things? I wondered to myself.

'Well done, love!' Peter cried out delightedly.

I was in shock.

In my whole life, I'd never won anything this big before!

The numbers seemed huge. Was it right that I'd won?

Still, I had no time to lose that morning, as I had to head out to my work as a hotel receptionist.

Work went by in a blur, I could hardly contain my excitement.

But I didn't bother to tell anyone, as I knew they would never have believed me...

I was known for being a calm person anyway, so my colleagues didn't know any better.

Once I had finished work for the day, I texted my boys Lee, 29, and Robert, 30, to break the news.

'Amazing, Mum!' they replied – but only after a bit of

WORDS: EMMIE HARRISON. PHOTOS: GETTY

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We're giving you the chance to win a fantastic tech bundle, including a TV, tablet and games console!

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g my big



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JACKPOT WINNER!

£4,766

pay: *Alexandra G*
Four Thousand, Seven Hundred
And Sixty Six Pounds

ANY TIME... ANYWHERE

The great thing about Pick Me Up! Bingo is that now you can play any time, anywhere you want. Choose from a huge range of games including favourites like Bingo Lounge, Emerald and Sapphire. You can start playing from 10p and you'll easily find your favourite game. Will you be our next big winner?



convincing over a whole number of text messages that I was actually being serious!

Once the penny really dropped, they were soon showering me with praise.

Bless.

Chuckling to myself, I started thinking about how I'd share out my jackpot win.

There was no question that I'd keep it all to myself!

For me, there was only ever one thing I was going to spend my winnings on.

My family.

I knew I wanted to treat my boys and six grandchildren.

Especially as we'd been through some tough times as a family lately.

So I showered the children with gifts from my jackpot, including new bikes, scooters, games consoles and lots of smart clothes.

I just loved spoiling them

all rotten.

Seeing their little faces light up was really special.

My family are such a tight-knit unit.

Lee only lives a street away, and so we see him most days.

The £4,766 jackpot win has been such

a huge treat for all my family.

My advice to anyone tempted to have a game of bingo would be

just to go for it.

If I can have a win, anyone could.

So, thank you Pick Me Up! Bingo for my surprise Jackpot win.

Me and my family are over the moon!

I started thinking about how I'd share out my jackpot win

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Sunny photos...

DARK TRUTH

She seemed to have it all...but Kate Pomeroy, 31, from Hampton-in-Arden, was hiding a troubling secret



Miami smile... But behind those glasses, my eyes were dead

Sitting at my computer, I typed the words into the search bar, then hit return.

Size zero celebrities.

My heart thumped as I waited for the results.

Then there they were. Pages and pages of photos of famous women looking super-skinny.

'They look like skeletons,' Mum would harrumph whenever very thin celebs made the papers.

But to me they looked gorgeous.

And everything I want to be, I thought.

It was the year 2000 and, back then, aged just 15, I was obsessed with celebrity culture.

Nicole Richie and Lindsay Lohan were my favourites.

I'd spend hours admiring their clothes, friendships, their lives. They seemed so glamorous and exciting.

And when they were both pictured looking painfully thin and hanging out together, I felt a pang of envious admiration.

'They're so cool,' I thought.

Nothing like me... Until a few months

earlier, I'd been ironing-board straight...but since puberty, I'd started sprouting hips and boobs, gone up to a size-12.

Just 5ft 3in tall, I hated my curvy new body.

So I started cutting down on meals – skipping breakfast and throwing away the healthy lunches Mum packed for me.

Instead, I'd chew on fat-free marshmallows. And the weight began to fall off.

But not enough.

So I became more daring, would hide bits of my dinner under a napkin when Mum wasn't looking, then later flush it down the loo.

In time, my body began to look more and more like the celebrity bodies I craved.

But rather than feel

happy, I felt sick.

My stomach constantly growled with hunger, and I felt miserable and depressed.

I was confused. Nicole and Lindsay seemed so happy...

But by the time I was 18, I was crying constantly and kept snapping at Mum.

At this point, I was wearing size-4 jeans – a US size-zero.

The ultimate accolade, I thought. But I was worried.

'I keep feeling down all the time,' I told my GP.

He weighed me and tested my blood pressure and heart rate.

At just 6st I was very underweight.

'Your blood pressure and heart rate are dangerously low,' he warned. 'And your BMI is only 15.'

That's when I first heard the word anorexia used to describe me.

I was prescribed an antidepressant, and when I started at Keele University the following year, I made lots of

friends. For a while, my confidence grew.

But the lure of stick-thin celebrities was too great.

By now it was Angelina Jolie I idolised.

So beautiful!

And yet so thin.

Over the next few years, I moved to Australia, then Bangkok, to teach English.

Posting pictures of me on Facebook, super-skinny, surrounded by turquoise seas and deserted beaches, I realised it was my life that looked glamorous now.

Never mind that I was surviving on just a small bowl of porridge each night, then spending hours at the gym trying to burn it off.

And who cared that I barely had any friends to share my life with – because I wouldn't let



Mum - there for me

In London, before facing my demons



a walk with my oldest friend Lisa, I even used the word 'anorexic' to describe myself for the first time ever.

'I've got an eating disorder and I'm anorexic,' I told her. 'And I'm going to get better.'

Lisa squeezed my arm.

Bless her, she must have known for years. But she didn't judge.

'That's really great to hear, Kate,' she said.

It wasn't easy, retraining my whole attitude towards food.

But the thing is about hitting rock bottom, going back up isn't as hard as you think.

Slowly, I began to eat sugar and fat again, tried to have everything in moderation.

Gradually my twiglet arms and legs began to fill out and become more healthy looking.

The burst blood vessels in my face from all the vomiting faded, and a healthy layer of flesh covered my knobbly spine and ribs.

So when I flew to Jamaica on holiday with a friend in March this year, I was proud to show off a rounded, fleshy bottom when I pulled on my swimming costume.

And this time, for the first time ever – as I posed for my holiday snaps with my friend – my smiles reached right up to my eyes.

Now, although I don't weigh myself any more, I know I'm a healthy size-8.

As for size-zero celebrities? I don't envy them any more.

Some of them seem like lost souls.

Just like I was.

So if you see someone on social media who seems to have it all – the looks, the friends, the glamorous life, remember something else...

Looks can be deceiving.



My 31st birthday - healthy and genuinely happy!

anyone get close.

I was skinny. I looked 'cool'. I was someone at last.

Right..?

In 2014, I moved to Hampton-in-Arden, bought a chocolate box cottage and set up a private-tuition business.

But though my home was gorgeous and my work a success, I still felt empty.

Invisible.

And more than anything, I wanted to be admired. To be seen.

So I blew £1,500 on a six-day trip to Miami.

Not to catch the sun.

Not to see the sights.

But so I could pout, pose, and post my pictures on social media.

So off I flew, packing my coolest clothes. And when I landed, after dumping my bags, I couldn't wait to start posting pictures of me somewhere glam.

Easier said than done.

Unlike Nicole and Lindsay, I didn't have a gal-pal to hang out with. I was out on my own.

So I had to ask strangers to snap me while I slapped on a

smile and posed in my denim hot pants, with the blue sky and sandy beach behind me.

I looked happy but my shades hid my expressionless, dead eyes.

Over those next couple of days, I was desperate to get as many cool pictures as I could, in the swankiest

locations, with me looking as skinny as possible.

Nothing else mattered.

Then, after a hard day's posing, I'd go back to my hotel room and throw up whatever scraps of food I'd survived on that day.

By now, I weighed 5½st.

Dangerously underweight.

And, four days into my holiday, I felt on the verge of losing my mind.

Here I was in Miami, super-slim, posting super-cool photos, but I'd never felt so alone.

I felt utterly dead inside.

And as I vomited in my hotel bathroom after another day's selfie-taking, suddenly I saw everything clearly.

This wasn't at all

glamorous or exciting.

It was heartbreaking.

I was sobbing as I rang my mum.

'I'm living a lie,' I sobbed.

'I want to come home.'

Thankfully, Mum was there for me when I flew back.

And she was there holding my hand as I went to my GP and asked for help.

In truth, Mum had always been there, I'd just pushed her away.

Because I'd refused to accept that there was

anything wrong.

But I couldn't live this way any more – it was time to face my demons.

I was prescribed antidepressants again – and, with Mum's support, I started gradually building up what I ate.

I also started to reconnect with my friends. My real friends, in the real world. Not people I was trying to impress on Facebook.

One day, while out for

I was super-slim, posting super-cool photos, but I'd never felt so alone

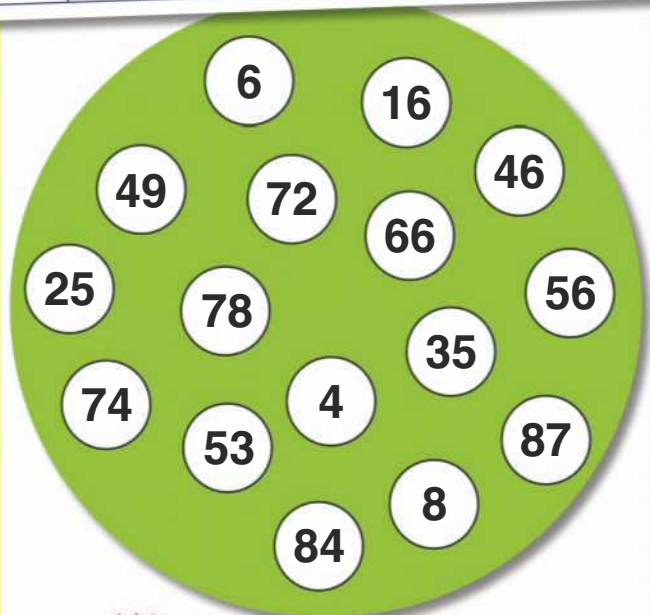
WIN £100!

PUZZLE 6

Strike it!

On your bingo card, cross out all the numbers that appear on the balls. Read the letters beside the remaining numbers on your card from left to right to spell out your answer word. To enter, complete the coupon on [page 45](#).

	G	9	S	25		E	47	B	50	O	60		K	81
T	4	H	16	I	28					O	63	L	72	
	U			D	33		S	56		I	74	N	87	



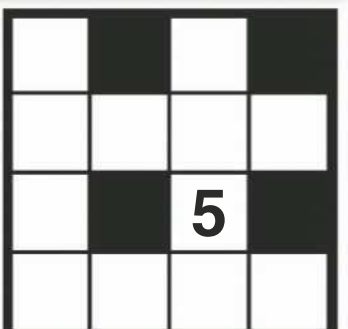
WIN £25!

PUZZLE 7

Number fit!

Which one of the listed numbers won't fit in this mini grid? To enter, complete the coupon on [page 45](#).

- 1598 8851
- 1855 8981
- 5189



Simply TWING

was smiling, but that wasn't fooling my partner Dan, 26. 'Don't worry,' he said, squeezing my hand as we sat in the hospital waiting room. 'It's going to be all right.'

My hand instinctively fluttered to my tummy. I was 13 weeks pregnant and we were waiting for our first scan.

It was our second child together - we already had Tyler, 4.

I also had Amelia, 8, from a previous relationship, and Dan had a 9-year-old daughter.

So it wasn't that I was a nervy first-time mum.

But I had good reason to be worried.

Just four weeks earlier, in July 2017, I'd been in a car crash.

My car was written off - but, luckily, I'd escaped with just a few bumps and bruises.

The hospital they'd taken me to at the time didn't have any way of scanning me to

check if my baby was OK.

They'd told me to come back if I experienced any bleeding.

Thankfully I hadn't, but that didn't stop fear niggling at me.

I prayed everything would be OK as the sonographer scanned my tummy now.

'There's a happy, healthy baby in there,' she said.

Thank goodness! Then she paused. I froze.

'But behind your baby,' she continued. 'There's another one.'

'Pardon?' I spluttered, shocked.

Dan's jaw dropped, then he burst out laughing.

'I told you!' he said.

And now I was laughing, too.

Though I was still early in my pregnancy, my bump was already so big that Dan had teased me that it would be twins.

But we'd never actually expected it.

Two more babies? How would we cope?!

It took me about three days

Dan's jaw dropped, then he burst out laughing!



Having twins isn't so unusual, but when Michelle Sandy, 32, from Southampton, went into labour, a surprise lay in store...

CREDIBLE!



One each for me and Dan!

screaming her little lungs out – weighing 4lb 8oz.

Looking at her, she was so tiny – but perfect.

'Will the next one arrive before midnight?' said the midwife, chuckling and checking the time.

She kept us hanging in there...

'Happy New Year!' the midwives and doctors cheered as the clock struck 12.

Then, just three minutes later...

Lyarna Rose arrived in the world, too – weighing exactly the same as her sister.

It was such a surreal experience.

All the doctors and nurses congratulated us on our weird, but amazing, delivery of the twins.

As they were so early they had to go into the Neonatal unit to be monitored, but both our girls were healthy.

A couple of days later, staff Googled how rare our situation was.

Twins with different birthdays in different years.

Amazing!

Apparently there was only one other case of twins being born either side of the New Year recorded, and that was in America.

That makes our twins pretty unique.

Five months on and the girls are doing great.

Dan and I are in charge of one twin each – Lyarna with Dan, Aliya with me.

We giggle about it – but we don't want to get them mixed up.

Their birthdays will be a two-day event – having a party for them on 31 December, then presents on 1 January the next year.

We want them both to feel special on each day.

Of course, when they get older they can decide how they want to celebrate it themselves.

I just can't believe my twin girls were born in different years.

Their birth will be a great story to tell them as they grow up!



to get my head round the news.

Friends and family couldn't believe it either.

Twins didn't even run in the family.

'I'm so nervous,' I said, confiding in a friend who already had twins.

'Just take each day as it comes,' she advised.

My pregnancy wasn't an easy one, though.

I suffered from low iron levels, and acid reflux, plus my bump got big so quickly, I felt exhausted.

I was also diagnosed with symphysis pubis dysfunction, which gave me backache and a painful pelvis.

So painful that I had to be signed off my work, as a cleaner, by doctors at 19 weeks.

I was due on 13 February this

year, but they planned to induce me at 36 weeks.

But going for a routine appointment on 28 December, they decided to keep me in after my waters broke with the first twin.

'We'll induce you in a couple of days,' the doctor said.

They did it on 31 December, and the waiting game was on.

But it took all day.

At 6pm on New Year's Eve, I was still only 2cm dilated.

'You've got quite

a way to go yet,' midwives said.

I was exhausted.

'What if one comes on one side of midnight and one comes on the other?' said Dan, joking.

Then the babies would be

Staff Googled how rare our situation was...

Easy eats...

Smart COOKIES

Sweet and chewy
bakes to fill up
your biscuit jar

28p
per
serving

Treat
of the
Week



Double Chocolatey Cookies

Makes: 16 Prep: 15 min Cook: 20 min

- 125g softened butter
- 125g light soft brown sugar
- 1 large egg
- 100g plain flour
- 1tsp baking powder
- 2tbsp cocoa powder
- 150g dark chocolate, cut into small chunks or chocolate chips

- 2 x baking trays, lined with baking paper

1 Preheat oven to 180C/
Gas 4. Beat together
butter and sugar with an
electric whisk until light and
fluffy. Add egg and beat. Sift

in flour, followed by baking
powder, cocoa powder and,
finally, chocolate chunks,
and make sure you mix well.

2 Place spoonfuls of the
mixture on the baking
trays, leaving room for the
cookies to spread as they

cook. Bake for 15 to 20 min,
when they should be cooked
and crisp around the edges.

3 Allow cookies to cool for
10 min on baking trays
before removing to a wire
rack to cool completely.
Keep in an airtight jar.



18p
per
serving

Oaty Raisin Cookies

Makes: 30 Prep: 15 min Cook: 15 min

- 200g butter, softened
- 300g light muscovado sugar
- 2 medium eggs
- Few drops of vanilla extract
- 175g plain flour
- 1 level tsp ground cinnamon
- 250g jumbo rolled porridge oats
- 150g raisins
- 2 baking trays, lined with baking paper

1 Preheat oven to 180C/Gas 4. Cream together butter and sugar until mixture is light and fluffy. Beat in eggs and vanilla extract.
2 Sift flour, cinnamon and a pinch of salt over

the creamed mixture. Add oats and raisins. Mix all ingredients together well.

3 Scoop out walnut-sized balls of mixture, roll them and put on the lined baking trays. Press down on them to flatten slightly.

4 Bake cookies in the centre of the oven for 12-15 min, or until they turn a light golden brown.

5 Remove biscuits from the oven and leave on baking sheets for a few min to cool slightly and firm up. Transfer to a wire rack to cool completely. Store in an airtight jar.

WIN £50
PUZZLE 8

Bitesize!

1	2	3	4
5			
6			
7			

Across

- 1 Fail to hit
- 5 Scheme
- 6 Bang shut
- 7 Wheel covering

Down

- 1 Befog
- 2 In a lazy way
- 3 Cauterise
- 4 Equal

Read down the shaded squares for the prize answer. To enter, see p45.

White Chocolate And Macadamia Cookies

Makes: 12 Prep: 15 min Cook: 15 min

- 160g light muscovado sugar
- 100g caster sugar
- 200g butter, softened
- 1tsp vanilla extract
- 1 medium egg
- 285g plain flour
- 1tsp baking powder
- 170g white chocolate chips
- 100g macadamia nuts, coarsely chopped
- Baking tray lined with baking paper

1 Heat oven to 190C/Gas 5. Beat sugars, butter, vanilla and egg in

a large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy. Beat in flour and baking powder, then stir in chocolate chips and nuts.

2 Take tablespoons of dough and shape into rough circles, then put on the baking tray, about 5-6cm apart. Bake for 10-15 min or until lightly golden brown.

3 Remove from oven and cool for a few mins, then transfer to a wire rack. Best eaten warm!

46p
per
serving



THE HIDDEN VICTIMS

Why don't more women report their rapes to police?

It's a question that no woman ever wants to ask themselves.

If I was raped, would I report it to police?

Perhaps it sounds like the answer should be a simple one.

After all, you'd report any other crime to the relevant authorities, so why not sexual violence?

But statistics show that the vast majority of victims of this horrific crime never do seek justice.

Why is this?

The latest figures available show that there's been an unprecedented rise in the number of reported rape cases, with 106,098 sexual offences recorded by the

police in the year ending March 2016.

However, this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Rape Crisis figures show that 85 per cent of those who experience sexual violence never report their ordeal to the police.

There are many reasons why some people decide not to speak out.

Some women fear reprisal, or they still feel the stigma of being a victim of sexual violence, and are

silenced by shame.

Another reason is that women wrongly blame themselves for what happened.

Then there's a huge worry that, if they do find the courage to come forward, they won't be believed.

However, there has been a raft of changes in the criminal-justice system over the past decades to support victims when they do come forward.

Those reporting sexual crimes to police can be expected to be interviewed by a specially trained officer, in a comfortable, safe space.

And if the case comes to court, there are ways to protect victims during the trial, such as a screen to shield them from their attacker, or the opportunity to give evidence via video.

But there's still work to be done.

Cases still happen where what a woman was wearing or whether she was drunk at the time is used by the attacker's defence to pass the blame to the victim.

Tactics like this must play a part in the shockingly low number of

convictions for sexual violence cases.

Rape Crisis reports that just 5.7 per cent of rapes reported to the police lead to a conviction – the lowest of any crime.

So it's understandable that victims don't want to put themselves through the trauma.

Kate, 31, is one of many who found it impossible to reach out for help.

When she was 18, she and her boyfriend planned a romantic night in.

They opened a bottle of wine and settled on the sofa.

'I'm not much of a drinker so I just had one glass,' Kate recalls of the next few hours. 'But I started to feel dizzy and disorientated, so I said I wanted some water. But as I went to the kitchen, he followed me and flipped.'

What came next would haunt her forever.

'I knew I wasn't drunk, but I felt strange. I said I wanted to call my mum but I couldn't find my phone. So, feeling even more disorientated, I climbed into bed,' she says.

'I saw him walk in the room, but it was a bit of a blur. I felt uncomfortable – he'd never made me feel like that – so I asked him to leave me alone.'

'Instead he got into bed and within seconds he was climbing on top of me. I tried to struggle away, asking him to get off. But he became more forceful, pinning me down. Then he raped me.'

'I was in shock, in pain and

Approximately 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped in England and Wales alone every year. That's roughly 11 rapes every hour.





Here's what You say...

Reporting rape is imperative, because it should result in fewer of those vile humans loose on our streets. People need to feel they can speak up and not feel ashamed for something that's out of their control.
Ashli Ross-Richardson, 29, Lincoln



Many people are ashamed of the fact they were raped and they tend to want to forget about what happened to them, which is understandable. Especially when people report an incident but, sadly, are not believed.
Sheena Wathall, 32, Grimsby Town



The first stage of securing a conviction is speaking out. And it helps people move forward. The #MeToo campaign has undoubtedly helped many, and at least allowed some to speak about what happened to them, even if it doesn't give justice to everyone.
Kimberley Hemmings, 27, Newcastle-under-Lyme



85% of sufferers of sexual violence never report it

felt utterly heartbroken. How could someone I loved do this to me?

When Kate woke the next day, her once-beloved boyfriend was gone, but her arms were covered in fingermark-shaped bruises from where he'd held her down.

This is the moment, she says, when she knows she should've gone straight to the police.

Instead, she hid her bruises, went home and got straight in the shower.

I felt so ashamed. I felt like nobody would believe me – because it wasn't a stranger who'd leapt out of the dark, it was a man I thought I knew, a man I thought I loved. I felt stupid and deeply betrayed,' Kate says.

Since then, she has had counselling, but believes she will never fully come to terms

with her attack. She believes seeking justice could help her get closure. But still can't bring herself to take that step.

It's clear the criminal-justice system needs to continue to evolve to make reporting these heinous crimes easier for victims, and supporting them through the process.

But culture is changing, too. Recent high-profile cases of sexual violence have thrown light on just how many people have fallen victim to this kind of crime, and encouraged others to come forward.

Operation Yewtree, which was launched in the wake of Jimmy Savile being exposed as a serial abuser, saw the number of alleged rapes recorded by police more than double.

And the #MeToo campaign

that began online in 2017 saw millions of people sharing their own stories of sexual harassment, assault and rape, many speaking openly for the first time.

The more the issue is talked about in public and the less stigma surrounding this heartbreaking crime, means the more likely it is that a victim will be believed.

It's time everyone understood that only one party should be ashamed after a rape, and it's never, ever the victim.

Get help
If you've been a victim of sexual assault, contact Rape Crisis for free on 0808 802 9999, or visit rapecrisis.org.uk

WHERE TO GET HELP

You can report a rape or sexual assault by calling 999 soon after the crime. If you're not sure yet whether you want to report it to the police, you can have a forensic medical examination carried out at your nearest Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC), where forensic evidence can be stored for a future date. Find your nearest SARC by calling NHS 111 or checking NHS.uk. If the rape or sexual assault happened a long time ago, you can still report this to the police by calling 111. It's never too late.

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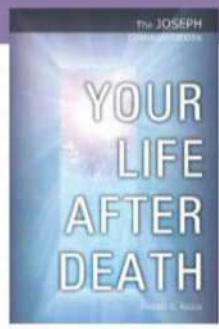
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Issue 20, 17 May 2018 Closing date for all entries: **23 May 2018** (three working days later for postal entries)

Puzzle 1 A quick word! p3

Final answer

Puzzle 2 Follow it! p8

Final answer

Puzzle 3 Crack it! p21

Final answer

Puzzle 4 Cross it! p24

Final answer

Puzzle 5 Sudoku! p24

Final answer

Puzzle 6 Strike it! p38

Final answer

Puzzle 7 Number fit! p38

Final answer

Puzzle 8 Bitesize! p41

Final answer

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PRIZE PUZZLE ANSWERS

Issue 18, 3 May 2018

Cross it!

```

EVIL MAHARAJA
I R S U
BASIN COSTUME
O I N B
BAUXITE SYNOD
N N T U
ADUKI C S T
B J F O R T I F Y
OVEN M U R O
SAX T E P O
C L A D J O I N
ATTAR O R T
G I W A
AVERSION MILD
    
```

Crack it!

```

CHAFF RAINY W
UR R E D E V E N
BURLESQUE L E E
E A E U A L L U D E
D I N S K I L L K
G I R I R O N I C
P R E L A T E S R L
H I S T U B B L Y
C E R T I F Y I E
T R O E A S T E R N
B O L E R O X O M
R T I A R A J L L
L I C H E N C K T O
C A O U T F I T T E R
J A Z Z T E N E R R
L Y I E L D G I D D Y
    
```

U A J O Z W E G I M C L F
Q S T B D H K R Y V N P X

Crack it! Poverty

A quick word!

Blissfully

Follow it!

```

F E C E A G
O U D O G E N I U S
R O I L G T R
S E A N C E S T I E U P
R E U A U E
D C U R B H E C T A R E S
N I N A N A O M I A R M O A T
S T A N G Y F E R R Y T
H E R O E C O I N S P E T
M M A R I O I F L A N S
A B S R T R U D G E I A
A C O S T E N D O N O R
D R E A M T E A S Y A R
K D A R K F L S K I D S
K I N D A I R L U L U M A N
N I N F L O W E R M A N I A
O G R E E N D S P A S S N P
    
```

Win without finishing!

```

T S S G T D
C R O P P E D S A V E L O Y
A R W R N T
A V O I D E D S I X T E E N
E T R N S A
S L E E P R O U G H C O D E
I A R L E
A R M E D T O T H E T E E T H
O X U Y E
I N C H M A R K E T E E R S
I E E S T G
K N O B B L Y F I S H N E T
I I T G N N
S C A T T E R T H R I F T Y
E S D T C S
    
```

Sudoku! 6,5,1

Strike it!

Embossing

Number fit! 366

Bitesize! Span

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Prize Winners, Issue 12, 22 March 2018

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D Barnes,
Great Yarmouth.

Strike it!
E Bennett,
Bacup.

Sudoku!
G Bartlett,
Chesham.

Crack it!
J Limebeer,
Croydon.

Cross it!
Y Nolan,
Fraserburgh.

Number fit!
J Beaumont,
Sheffield.

Follow it!
H Dixon,
Selby.

A quick word!
C Bayliss,
Cambridge.

Bitesize!
K Johnson,
Wallsend.

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WIN PUZZLE 9

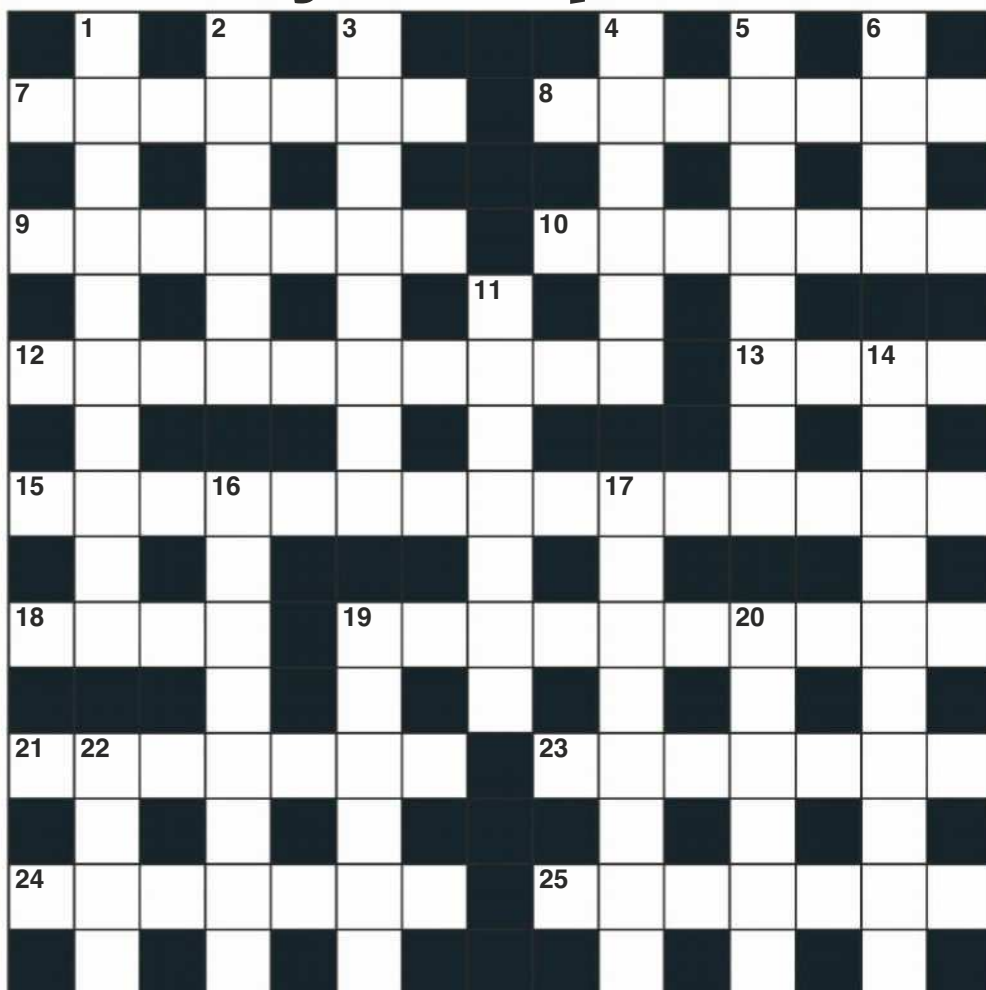
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if you complete the lot!

How this special puzzle works:
If your entry is first out of the hat, you win £25 for every correct answer, and if you've correctly completed the lot, we'll make the winning total up to £1,000! Fill in the coupon overleaf and send the whole page to enter.



ACROSS

- 7 Go and fetch (7)
- 8 Intelligent sea mammal (7)
- 9 Traveller to a shrine (7)
- 10 Brave soldier (7)
- 12 Town of your entry into the world (10)
- 13 Capital city of Peru (4)
- 15 Act of cheating (10,5)
- 18 One who consumes goods (4)
- 19 Study tasks (10)
- 21 Man whose wife has died (7)
- 23 Pub amateur singing event (7)
- 24 In ... heaven, on cloud nine (7)
- 25 Carefully checking (7)

DOWN

- 1 Lawyers (10)
- 2 Dismount from a vehicle (6)
- 3 Was thrifty (8)
- 4 Spirit, mood (6)
- 5 Hand-held firework (8)
- 6 Washable floor covering (4)
- 11 Profitable (7)
- 14 Dishing the dirt (4-6)
- 16 Grooved, rutted (8)
- 17 Forced into servitude (8)
- 19 Invent, make (6)
- 20 Riches, affluence (6)
- 22 Thing on a list (4)



The **only** prize crossword in the world you don't have to finish to win!



With my wife Andrea in St Kitts

Who'll be sitting in my seat?



Flight or FRIGHT?

Whenever David Traynor, 51, from Wigan, gets on a plane, he finds the dead are there to greet him...

My tummy fluttered with excitement as I boarded the plane, still buzzing from my trip away. But, as I reached my seat, I noticed a woman was already sitting in it. *I'll just politely ask her to move,* I thought. But as I went to speak, it hit me. She wasn't a fellow passenger – she was a spirit! It was May 2010, and I was heading home from a spiritual retreat in Sweden. It was a full

plane, and I wondered how I'd fly back to Manchester Airport with a ghost in my chair... Not wanting to make a fuss about it, I plonked myself down. Sitting right on the spirit lady! A well-built, elderly woman, she looked so solid. But the only sign I was sharing my seat with a ghost were the draughts of cold air flowing over me. After the plane took off, I got chatting to the young lady in the seat beside me. She was in her early 30s, and she told me she'd been visiting her boyfriend. As we talked, the spirit

lady whispered in my ear. 'She's my daughter,' she clearly announced. Hesitating, I took a deep breath... 'I'm a spirit medium and I think I've got your mum with me,' I explained gently. Her mouth opened as she stared at me in shock. 'Her name's Dorothy,' I continued. 'She died suddenly of a heart attack last January.' 'That's her!' the woman gasped. 'Your mum approves of your new man,' I smiled. Dorothy revealed her daughter's boyfriend wanted her to move to Sweden to be with him, but she was unsure. However, Dorothy had no such reservations. 'Your mum's telling you to go for it!' I told the woman. When the plane landed, the woman took my hand. 'I didn't believe in the spirit

world, but I do now,' she said. Dorothy isn't the only spirit I've encountered on my travels. Two years later, me, my friend Barry and my wife Andrea, 47, were flying back from Alicante, following a trip to Spain. Suddenly, a spirit started whispering to me. 'I'm Irene,' she announced. I knew she must have come to speak to the woman sitting next to me. 'Was your mum called Irene?' I asked her. Astonished, she nodded. Chatty, Irene spent the whole flight giving me messages for her delighted daughter. I didn't even get to eat! It isn't just while I'm travelling that I pick up on spirits. They come through to me while I'm on holiday, too. Once, on holiday on the Caribbean island of St Kitts, I saw the ghosts of soldiers killed during a siege. They told me their names, which we later saw on placards to commemorate the fallen troops. Disturbingly, I could also feel how they died. And on a trip to Paris, I once saw spirit hands and faces appear in my hotel room. But I'm not scared. I'm blessed. As a spirit medium, I spend my life surrounded by spirits. Speaking to them is part of who I am, and I can't switch it off while I'm away. But my gift is a blessing, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

I plonked myself down, right on the spirit lady!

Look Amazing!

This week: Our top-10 tan heroes



Velvotan The Original Tanning Mitt in Tropical, £2.99, Asda

Avoid stained hands by always applying your tan with a mitt. This one has a lotion-resistant barrier to stop the product seeping through and is machine washable, so you can reuse it as many times as you like.

Sienna X Secret Tan Primer, £9

The best way to avoid a fake-tan fail is to prep properly - so exfoliate the night before and moisturise regularly. Just before you tan, apply this cream to areas that can give the game away (elbows, hands, knees and ankles) for a natural-looking finish.



Scrub up well!

Cocoa Brown Tough Stuff 3 in 1 Body Scrub, £4.99, Superdrug

Buff away dead skin cells and stubborn old tan by using this scrub once a week. Focus on particularly dry areas, like your elbows and knees, to stop the new tan from clinging there.

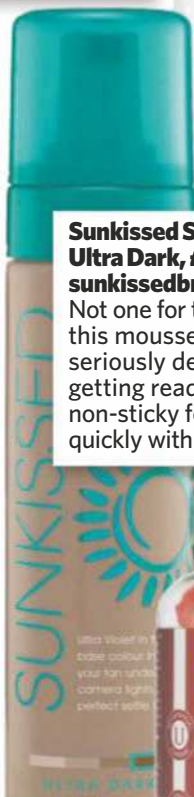


Dove Visible Glow Self-Tan Lotion, £6, Tesco

When it comes to body care, everyone knows Dove is the brand to trust. Just as hydrating as their other moisturisers, this lotion contains a hint of self-tan to slowly build a sun-kissed glow.

Sunkissed Self Tan Mousse Ultra Dark, £5.99, sunkissedbronzing.co.uk

Not one for tanning newbies, this mousse delivers a seriously deep tan. Great for getting ready in a hurry, the non-sticky formula dries quickly with an instant colour.



Instant effect

St Moriz Tan Boosting Facial Serum, £9.99, Superdrug

Designed to be used on your face, mix three to six drops of this serum with your normal moisturiser for a sun-kissed glow without compromising on your other skincare.



Stain-free glow

Bellamianta Liquid Gold Self Tanning Tinted Liquid, £12, bellamianta.com

New Irish brand Bellamianta has worked hard to make luxe products at a reasonable price. This liquid develops over two to four hours and won't stain your clothes or your sheets if you leave it on overnight.



UTAN Tan Gummies, £17.99 for a 30-day supply, Superdrug

Say hello to the world's first edible tanning supplements! Using a blend of vitamins, minerals and plant nutrients, these gummies will give you a healthy glow all year round and help speed up the tanning process when the sun finally makes an appearance.



St. Tropez Gradual Tan 1 Minute Everyday Pre-Shower Mousse, £14.50

It's pricey, but this mousse is the most convenient tan yet. Apply to dry skin, leave on for one minute then shower as normal. It builds a subtle tan from day one, with no scent.



Solait Tan Prolonger, £4.99, Superdrug

Whether you're heading to sunnier climes or making the most of the weather here in the UK, this lotion will help you cling on to your glow for longer. Using vitamin E, grapeseed and sweet almond oil, it nourishes skin while building a natural-looking tan.



Your Stars

10-16 May 2018

7 days of hope & happiness with Claire Petulengro

ARIES

21 March-20 April

Are you making more of an issue because you want to fall out with a close one, or because you really believe their words and actions have been unacceptable? It's only by answering this question honestly that you'll work out what your next - and fair - move should be.

Call: 09058 170 710*

TAURUS

21 April-21 May

It's really important that you think about your career and where you see yours headed. You'll mix with some powerful people from Tuesday, and they can help you take things to a whole new level. Stick to arrangements this weekend - you'll be pleased you did!

Call: 09058 170 711*

GEMINI

22 May-21 June

Just believe that you can...and you're halfway there, Gemini! For too long, you've been taking advice from those whose lives you'd never want for your own. Aim high and don't look back. A big reshuffle could see a change of residence for some of you.

Call: 09058 170 712*

CANCER

22 June-23 July

If you're presenting yourself with confidence this week, you should be able to pull off pretty much anything. Don't be afraid to travel to meet up with someone who you don't know that well. Aspects tell me this is going to be the beginning of something special.

Call: 09058 170 713*

LEO

24 July-23 Aug

You're tired of your usual routine and looking for more fun in life. This can be found by listening to your dreams, and not ignoring them. Problems with cash flow can be sorted out by going to the source of the problem. Wear grey for luck in love on Friday.

Call: 09058 170 714*

VIRGO

24 Aug-23 Sept

Try not to say things you don't mean, just to get a response from a close one. There's so much work to do on your relationship that you don't want to give yourself more. Say yes to old friends' invites and don't cancel at the last minute - there's fun times ahead.

Call: 09058 170 715*

LIBRA

24 Sept-23 Oct

I can see from your chart how much pressure there's been in home matters, but I also know you've done an admirable job. You've made sure everyone handles things as best they can. Well done, Libra. Look how far you've come since this time last year!

Call: 09058 170 716*

SCORPIO

24 Oct-22 Nov

Your house of finances is about to come under the spotlight. You find yourself having to prioritise your affairs - decide what's most important, and what you must put on the backburner. Ignore other people, and go with your own take on what needs to be done.

Call: 09058 170 717*

SAGITTARIUS

23 Nov-21 Dec

The way you look comes under the spotlight, and many of your sign may even find themselves going for a drastic overhaul of their image. Your subconscious is telling you that you need to take on what's set to be your most courageous adventure yet.

Call: 09058 170 718*

CAPRICORN

22 Dec-20 Jan

You think someone close to you isn't being supportive, but they don't know how to deal with you, after your rather strange behaviour last week. Talking to them will prove you're still a team - so stop shutting them out. It's not making either one of you happy.

Call: 09058 170 719*

AQUARIUS

21 Jan-19 Feb

There's a really nostalgic feel to your chart, and this could see you browsing through old photos or thinking of getting in touch with folk you no longer see. A split in your circle changes the dynamics of everything - but my question is, how does it make you feel?

Call: 09058 170 720*

PISCES

20 Feb-20 March

Try to let those you love know how much you care for them, as many of the star signs are feeling more sensitive than usual. Your love sector shows a time of great changes, and much progress - which was impossible last month - can finally be made.

Call: 09058 170 721*

*Starlines updated every Thursday. Calls cost 80p per min plus your telephone company's network access charge and last approx 4 mins. Callers must be 18+. You must have bill payer's permission. SP: Spoke 0333 202 3390.

In next week's
Pick Me Up!

**DYING TILLA
STRANGER SAVED ME**



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STARTED AT
SCHOOL!**



MY JILTED HUBBY'S

**BLOODY
REVENGE**



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17 May**

PHOTOS: MIRRORPIX, TALK TO THE PRESS, WORLDWIDEFEATURES.COM

YOU'VE GOTTA LAUGH!

One DAFT DAD!



These funny pics of Sholom Ber Solomon, 37, from California, and his baby girl went global!

WORDS: JAMES HANMAN, VICTORIA BURT FOLLOW @SBSOLLY ON INSTAGRAM TO KEEP UP WITH SHOLOM AND ZOE.

We're pregnant!' grinned my wife Carli, 33. It was January 2016, and the best news I'd ever heard. 'Amazing!' I exclaimed. We'd been married for two years and couldn't wait to start our family. Then, when little Zoe was born that September, I was in awe of how tiny and beautiful she was.

I loved being a dad, and was so proud, I wanted to scream from the rooftops.

On her first day of life, I must've taken a thousand photos!

I could have some fun with this, I thought, flicking through them.

Getting creative is a real passion for me.

Growing up, I'd drawn lots of cartoons, and I loved taking quirky snaps.

Everyone posts loads of photos of their newborns, but I decided ours would be different... So I asked Carli to

take a photo of Zoe's first bubble bath, with me in a snorkling mask, glaring at a laundry detergent box as if I'd accidentally used it instead of bath cream!

'You're nuts!' laughed Carli.

Posting it online, friends and family commented away.

Amazing! You should do more!

Carli couldn't hold back her laughter as she snapped me and Zoe in countless funny costumes, poses and scenarios.

Over the next months, we

shot me changing Zoe's nappy while wearing a gas mask; the two of us dancing in tutus, and even on the beach in

Hawaiian shirts and coconut bras.

Zoe was a natural, so whenever a new idea came to me, I'd search online for bargain fancy dress outfits, and work to recreate my vision.

Then, last June, as I was scrolling through Facebook, I

suddenly saw news articles... about me and Zoe!

They said our pictures had gone viral, and I learned that we had fans everywhere from

the UK to Germany to Japan. I'd gone from 200 followers to 200,000!

Do a calendar! people kept commenting. So, last December, I did just that.

My favourite pic is still the one of Zoe dressed as a chicken sitting inside a KFC bucket! But it's hard to choose.

There's one snap of me as a traffic cop with Zoe looking up at me from the driver seat – that's another fave.

New ideas keep coming, so I'm keen to keep shooting for as long as Zoe, now almost 20 months, lets me. One day, I'll get them made into a book for her to look back on.

It'll be something fun to embarrass her with on her 18th birthday!

We had fans everywhere from the UK to Germany to Japan



I'm just 'potty' about my little chick!



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Glittering Columbus

Proud flagship of the CMV fleet and sailing from her home port of London Tilbury, beautifully appointed Columbus offers a range of hugely enjoyable, great value voyages, adding a touch of contemporary style to the traditional welcome and friendly warmth that have long been the hallmarks of the line.



Sleek, majestic Magellan

Since her arrival in the UK in 2015, sleek, majestic Magellan has built a fine reputation, and has been a welcome addition to the CMV fleet of traditional ocean-going cruise liners. Sailing from a choice of regional ports Magellan brings a touch of contemporary chic to the traditional welcome of the CMV cruise experience.



Elegant Marco Polo

In an age of vast, impersonal, floating hotels, 22,000-tonne Marco Polo, her profile marking her out as the epitome of sea-going elegance even before you've stepped aboard, is a beautiful ocean liner in the classic tradition. Offering high levels of comfort, sumptuous dining in stylish surrounds, and a warm welcome.



Intimate Astoria

Beautifully appointed 550-passenger Astoria, with her classic profile, fine lines and range of on-board amenities, is every inch the perfect complement to her sister ships. Originally built as a transatlantic liner and beautifully restored, Astoria offers all the comforts, convenience and a warm welcome that is the hallmark of all CMV operations.

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2019 Cruise programme	Departs	Days	Ship	Full fare first person	Second person
Sailing from Tilbury					
British Isles Discovery	5 May	11	Columbus	£1,549	Free
Grand Baltic Cities & St Petersburg	15 May	15	Columbus	£2,169	Free
Majestic Fjordland	29 May	8	Columbus	£1,069	Free
Iceland & Northern Isles	15 Jun	13	Columbus	£1,859	Free
Canary Islands & Madeira	16 Oct	16	Columbus	£2,179	Free
Weekend to Amsterdam and Antwerp	31 Oct	4	Columbus	£439	Free
Arctic & Greenland Expedition Voyage	21 Jul	23	Marco Polo	£3,559	Free
Rotterdam Mini Cruise	12 Aug	3	Marco Polo	£259	Free
Sailing from Portsmouth					
Special 75th D Day Anniversary	2 Jun	7	Marco Polo	£979	Free
Rouen Armada & River Seine	9 Jun	9	Marco Polo	£1,209	Free
Iceland & Northern Isles	17 Jun	13	Marco Polo	£1,769	Free
Sailing from Newcastle					
Baltic Cities & St Petersburg	4 May	15	Magellan	£2,129	Free
Majestic Fjordland	18 May	8	Magellan	£1,069	Free
Round Britain & River Seine	21 June	12	Magellan	£1,709	Free
Overnight Mini Cruise	14 Aug	2	Marco Polo	£109	Free

2019 Cruise programme	Departs	Days	Ship	Full fare first person	Second person
Sailing from Dundee					
Iceland, Faroes & Northern Isles	9 Jun	14	Magellan	£2,019	Free
Round Britain & River Seine	22 Jun	12	Magellan	£1,709	Free
Sailing from Liverpool					
Grand Fjordland Splendour	27 Jul	13	Magellan	£1,859	Free
Spain, Portugal & Gibraltar	8 Aug	11	Magellan	£1,519	Free
Sailing from Bristol					
British Isles Discovery	1 Sep	12	Magellan	£1,709	Free
Iceland's Land of Ice & Fire	12 Sep	13	Magellan	£1,769	Free
Sailing from Cardiff					
Iceland & Northern Isles	3 May	13	Marco Polo	£1,769	Free
Isles of Scilly & Honfleur Weekend	15 May	5	Marco Polo	£559	Free
Sailing from Hull					
Fjordland Splendour	12 Sep	9	Astoria	£1,159	Free
Baltic Cities & St Petersburg	20 Sep	15	Astoria	£2,029	Free
Norway & Land of the Northern Lights	12 Oct	14	Astoria	£1,789	Free
Sailing from Rosyth					
Faroes & Northern Isles	18 Aug	6	Marco Polo	£779	Free

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*Buy One Get One Free discount applies to new bookings on 2019 cruises only made between 1st March and midnight 31st May.



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