

ONLY **69p**

I **BEGGED** docs to cut off my arm

7 June 2018 69p

Issue 23

Pick Me Up!



FULL OF GREAT PUZZLES!



You won't believe how hubby looks **NOW!**

'I'd rather DIE than DIET'



A MUM'S GUILT

I had to leave one of my babies BEHIND

PREDATOR at the soft-play centre

I had to STOP my evil uncle



Ex's new girlfriend made my life HELL



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Stella Trickett, 70, from Dorset, will get a flowery thank you this week. Her daughter Claire, 36, wrote to say...

Me and my mum Stella have always been close. Best friends as well as mother and daughter.

Every day our relationship goes from strength to strength as we both face new challenges.

I remember when I was 21 and told her I was engaged to my husband John, 66, and how excited the two of us were.

We spent days planning the wedding and getting excited over all the tiny details.

She offered to pay for my wedding dress and, in the beginning, I refused.

But, being the kind-hearted and loving person she is she wouldn't take no for an answer.

Not only that, but she surprised me and my hubby by paying for our four-day honeymoon in Devon.

She does so much for me



Family time: I love being with my mum

and I really love spending my time with her.

Everyone loves her – from neighbours to her colleagues.

I want to say a huge thanks to her for always being there and helping me every single day.

You work so hard and always put others before yourself.

But now this is my turn to take care of you.

You really are the best mum in the universe – and I'm so lucky that you're mine!

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 how to get in touch with us.



Contents

On the cover

- 6 Predator at the soft-play centre
- 10 I begged docs to cut off my arm
- 22 A mum's guilt: I had to leave a baby behind
- 28 Breast-cancer buddies: We'll both beat it
- 30 Rather die than diet
- 42 Ex's new girlfriend made my life hell

More real life

- 14 Making her mark
- 18 The woman hunter
- 22 The unbreakable bond
- 24 Bingo winner
- 34 Addiction prescription?
- 38 Girl rocked our world
- 47 Fighting for Nana
- 50 Here vrooms the bride!

PMU value

- 12 Deals of the week!
- 20 Genius or totally bonkers?

From you

- 3 One in a million!
- 4 Your wild week...
- 13 Your brainwaves...
- 28 Hello baby!
- 33 Animal magic

Feelgood

- 16 Your health: Smiling inside
- 21 Your dilemmas...
- 26 Your style
- 36 Look amazing!
- 37 Your telly
- 40 Easy eats...
- 49 Your stars

Puzzles

- 3 A quick word!
- 8 Win £1,000!
- 20 Win £300!
- 22 Win 2 x £25!
- 38 Win £100!
- 38 Win £25!
- 41 Win £50!
- 45 Puzzles entry form
- 46 Win £1,000!

WORDS: EMMA ROSSITER

Sneaky peek at this week!



Tatt's the way to do it... p14

PHOTO: ANDREW WHITE, COPY MEDIA



P42 I owe him nothing!

A quick word!

£25! WIN PUZZLE 1

Unscramble our word of the week. Clue: Stella is the best mum in this. (You'll find the word somewhere on this page!) Enter on page 45.

VEINSEUR

Your Wild week...

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



My husband and I really looked the part for our friend's 1920s-themed birthday party.
Amy Close, Surrey

Matthew, my son, said this chair wasn't that comfy, despite being made of £1 million, but he still wants one. Yeah, right!
Gemma Parish, Peterlee



My boys caught a real-life Pokémon on a visit to Cardiff. They were both so excited!
Lisa Lewis, Swansea

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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I was so lucky to swim with dolphins in Mexico and this one was the friendliest ever. They are such beautiful creatures!
Lucy Neville, West Bromwich





Here's my 7-month-old son Louie-Jay looking pretty pleased with himself after rolling over for the first time.
Becky Ward, Birmingham



I was so proud of my children Maddie, 9, and Charlie, 6. They love taking part in charity events and helping others.
Kellie Ellison, Manchester



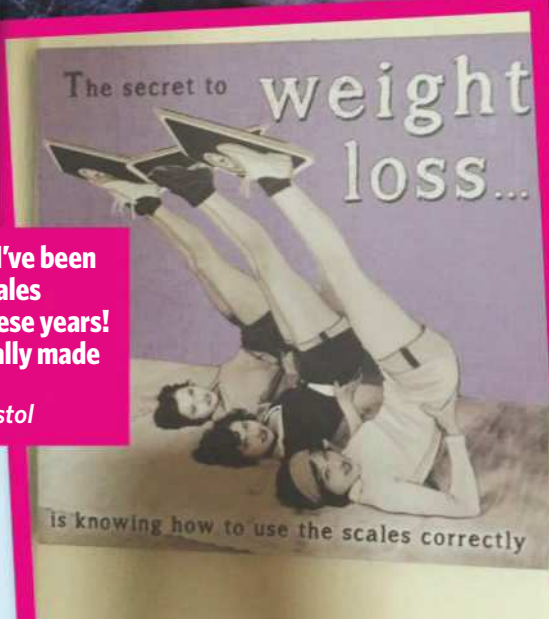
Me having the best time in Sri Lanka - swinging from a palm tree against spectacular views.
Amie Truby, Barnet



My girlfriend and I taking in the view after digging out our mud hole on the beach in New Zealand.
Justin Harding, Somersham



It turns out I've been using the scales wrong all these years! This sign really made me laugh.
T Griffin, Bristol



There was no better way to commemorate my travels in Australia than with a kangaroo selfie. He even smiled!
Olivia Hawtin, Devon

Exposing the

FAMILY SECRET

A dark cloud hung over her life until Helen Pearce, 42, from Maesteg, discovered she wasn't the only one hiding something terrible



Bodycombe:
'Uncle John'

Sitting at the kitchen table in my grandparents' house, I worked carefully on my colouring book.

'That's very good, Helen,' my gran smiled.

Aged 5, I preferred to play quietly by myself while my brother David, then 7, played with our grandfather.

We loved visiting our grandparents. And our Uncle John - Mum's brother - lived with them, too, so he made a fuss of us.

After I'd finished colouring, John, then 21, came over and ruffled my hair.

'Got you this from the shop,' he said, handing me a comic.

'Not fair!' David sulked, later. 'John never buys me anything.'

I'd always been Uncle John's favourite.

Whenever we stayed at my grandparents' house, Gran would let me sleep in John's room and he'd sleep on the sofa downstairs.

But, most nights, I'd

wake up to find him in bed with me.

The first time, my orange knickers were around my ankles, and Uncle John was touching me between my legs.

I was only little at the time, too young to understand what was going on.

It's because I'm his favourite, I'd reasoned.

Over the years, it'd happened again and again and I grew up thinking it was normal.

Uncle John would use every opportunity to get me alone.

If I was in the bath at my grandparents'

house, he'd sneak in and expose himself to me.

As I got older, Uncle John became even more brazen.

One day, while Mum and Gran were in the kitchen making a pot of tea, he sat on the sofa next to me.

Then he slipped his hands under my blanket and began touching me.

When I was 8, John's abuse got worse. I woke up at my grandparents' one night to find John next to me, rubbing his penis on my thigh.

I jumped from the bed, ran to Gran and woke her up.

'I had a nightmare!' I cried, climbing into bed with her - too scared to tell her the truth.

After that, I refused to stay again. By now, I had a baby brother, Andrew, and used him as an excuse not to visit.

'I want to stay home

and play with Andrew,' I'd say to Mum.

As I grew up, my family began to notice a change in me, but they thought I was just a miserable teen.

'Cheer up!' Mum would say.

If only everyone knew the truth behind my frown...

Over the years, I did my best

to bury the abuse and, in 1998, I started dating Matthew, then 18.

I'd known him for years and I'd already told him about the abuse. He was so supportive.

In February 2000, we had a daughter.

When she was 3 months old, I was on the bus with Mum when we bumped into Uncle John.

Mum had no idea about the abuse and waved him over.

'John, look at my lovely granddaughter,' she said proudly to him.

John peered at the bundle in my arms and smiled.

'She's beautiful,' he said.

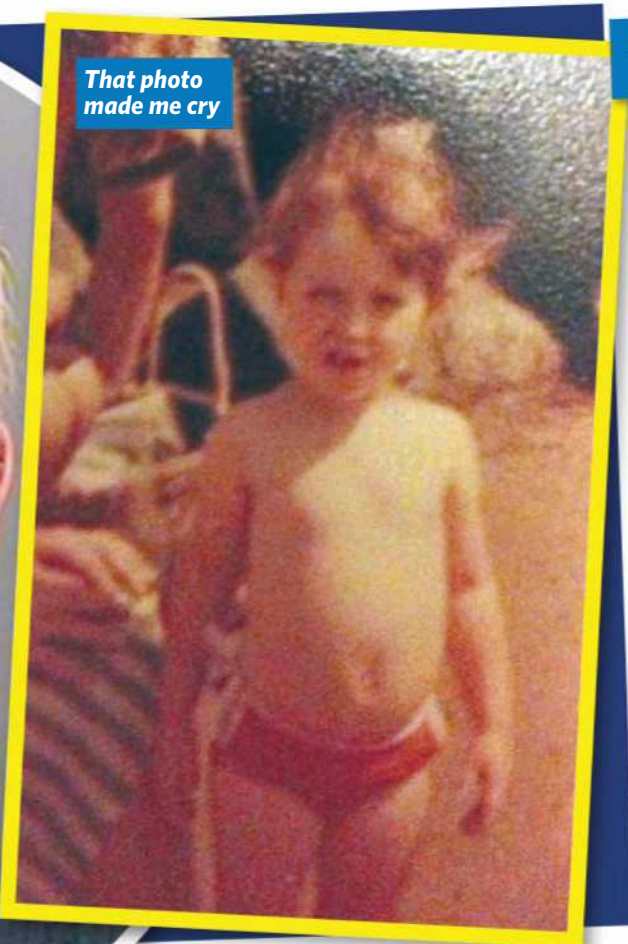
Horrified, I turned my back

I was only little, too young to understand what was going on



With my brothers - I had no idea...

That photo made me cry



away from him to protect my baby. I felt physically sick.

In April 2002, I had a son, followed by another boy in January 2004.

With each baby, I grew even more protective. I battled with my emotions, too, plagued with thoughts of John's vile abuse.

I even found an old photo of me, aged 3, in which I wore a pair of orange knickers – the same pair Uncle John had tugged down.

My innocent face in the picture made me cry for the childhood I'd lost.

A few years on, I was diagnosed with depression after I had a breakdown and tried to take an overdose.

My family, including David and Andrew, were all so worried for me.

Then, one afternoon in 2008, I finally found the courage to open up to them.

Andrew and I got chatting over a brew.

'I've never told you this, but Uncle John abused me,' I admitted.

Andrew's face turned grey with shock.

He sat there in silence for a few moments, then he said something that shook me to the core... 'He abused me, too,'

he said, breaking down.

Uncle John had touched him a few times when he was just 3 or 4 years old.

I felt sick.

John must've turned his attention to Andrew when he couldn't get to me any more.

'I'm so sorry!' I cried.

I felt guilty, and tortured myself that I'd not stopped myself hurting my baby brother.

Like me, Andrew didn't feel ready to tell anyone else.

'I just want to forget it,' he said to me.

So we both kept it bottled up – Andrew kept my secret and I kept his.

Then, two years on, David and I were chatting on the phone when he blurted something out.

'Something happened when we were kids. Uncle John did

something to me...' he said.

He didn't tell me what exactly, but I just knew he'd been a victim, too.

All three of us.

Vile.

Poor David had been traumatised by it and had buried it for years.

I didn't know what'd made him tell me now, but it must've been torturing him.

When I told him about me and Andrew, he broke down.

'I had no idea!' he cried.

My blood boiled that our own uncle had preyed on us all.

'He's nothing but a twisted pervert!' I raged.

David, Andrew and I wanted to erase John from our lives, so we tried to move on from it.

police and, a few days on, we were told that John had been arrested.

He denied everything.

So last December, we gave evidence at Cardiff Crown Court.

John Bodycombe, 58, was found guilty of 14 counts of indecent assault against me, David and Andrew.

He was sentenced to 17 years behind bars, ordered to sign the sex offenders register and made the subject of a sexual harm prevention order.

I let out a cry of sheer relief.

'It's over,' I wept to David and Andrew.

Since then, we've tried our best to move on.

I still struggle with

In that moment, I felt a weight lift from my shoulders

depression – I feel as if I'm grieving for the childhood that I lost.

I'm so proud of my brothers for being strong and speaking up.

The ordeal has united us as siblings.

I just hope

But the abuse just plagued us, was always at the back of our minds.

Then, one day in 2016, I got a call from Andrew.

'The police want to speak to you,' he began. 'I've told them everything about John.'

Our secret was out.

And, in that moment, I felt a weight lift from my shoulders.

Andrew explained that he'd been at a soft-play area with his family and had bumped into John.

He'd caught John looking at a child.

It had enraged Andrew, so he'd confronted him.

'John pretended he didn't know who I was,' Andrew explained to me.

Furious, Andrew had gone straight to the police.

And David and I were so pleased that he had.

Together, the three of us could stand strong and finally get justice.

We all gave statements to the

that by sharing our story, we can encourage others to come forward and get the justice they deserve.

It's never too late to make your voice heard.

John Bodycombe is appealing his sentence.

● **Andrew Pearce, 35, says, 'What this man has done has devastated our family. He left me with little to no confidence in my youth and it has taken me many years to get my life on track.'**

● **David Pearce, 44, says, 'I feel vindicated, relieved and satisfied we did the right thing, coming forward after many years of suffering in silence.'**

Today, we're strong: David, me and Andrew




**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 out in the yellow squares.

Enter on page 45.

£1,000!

			Clairvoyant	Evil giant	Common fraction	Barry , Aussie actor	Complete nonsense	Lose your footing	Reverberate		
	Team of oarsmen					Time-telling word					
	Grow, advance		Large rodent			Legume	And so forth (abbr)	Proposed spot	Gaberdines		
							Venue of the Derby				
	Spellbound		Expert golfer	Rotary engine		Tailed amphibian	Gosling, actor	Gone bad	Small bar of bullion		
See photo	Confronting	Dusting powder			Drug						
			Temporary peace			Person who looks after guests	Marshy regions				
Gangster's girl	Find repugnant, loathe				Quay			Humour	Norway's capital		
			Separate	Military stick			Old Tom Hollander sitcom	Lowing sound			
African antelope	Spiny desert plants				Eternally	Drink made with a bag	Street disorders				
		Breakfast food	Long thin nuts	Stinging weed	N	E	T	T	L	Passports, eg	Uniformly
Period of a lease	Diagram in an atlas			First woman	V		Pens for hens	Old TV recorder			
				Country walk	E			Besides, too	Prosecuted	Auction	
Saucepan covers	Engrave			Hired	R	Actor's prompt	Donkeys				
			Feel unwell			Whorl			Stubbs, actress		
Citrus hybrid	Connected, joined (6,2)							Bulge			
			Become solid, like a jelly			Forecourt fuel company			Stain (cloth)		

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EATEN ALIVE

How did a sunny morning in the garden lead to this? Tracey Dinning, 50, from Chertsey, Surrey, shares her shocking story



Enjoying a glorious summer's morning in July 2015, I was outside laying out a few books on a blanket for the kids at nursery.

I loved my job as a nursery nurse, caring for the little ones, even though I had my own kids, Mark, 17, Alisha, 10, Freya, 8, and Charlie, 3, at home.

I was just finishing up in the garden when...

'Ouch!' I cried suddenly, slapping my right arm as I felt the painful prick of an insect bite.

I rubbed the small red bump on the inside of my right wrist and went inside to pop some cream on it.

'There's loads of mosquitoes about,' sighed my colleague, Yasmin, 18, looking at my wrist and pulling up her trouser leg, revealing six huge bumps.

'I know, but this really hurts,' I frowned.

'Not like you to be such a wimp!' she laughed.

She was right.

'Tough as old boots,' my husband, Jim, 44, always called me.

I didn't want to make a fuss,

but my wrist was throbbing like mad.

After an hour, it was so swollen, I had to take my bracelet off.

By the afternoon, I was feeling really drowsy and sick and had to sit down on the bench outside.

'You OK?'

Yasmin asked, looking concerned.

'I'm not sure,' I said, feeling disorientated.

I left at 3pm to pick the girls up from school, but even on the short trip I struggled to keep my eyes open.

'Can you give them dinner?'

I groaned to my eldest, Mark, as I literally crawled up the stairs at home.

'What's wrong, Mum?' Alisha asked me.

'I'm feeling a bit sick,' I managed to gasp, before hauling myself up into bed, fully clothed.

The kids all gathered around the bed, eyes wide with worry.

'Mummy's never sick,' I heard Freya whisper before

Just an insect bite..?



I drifted off into a deep sleep.

Jim woke me at 9pm, sitting on the end of the bed.

He'd just got home from his shop job.

'I need the toilet but I haven't got the energy to get up,' I sobbed.

'I'll help you,' said Jim, lifting me to the bathroom and helping me get into my pyjamas.

'I think I've got flu,' I shivered, feeling feverish and lethargic.

But when Jim caught sight of my arm, now red and swollen up to my elbow, he rushed downstairs for

some anti-allergy tablets.

'Looks like you've had a bad reaction to that bite,' he said.

I couldn't believe that an innocent bug bite could make me feel so awful.

But the next morning it was obvious there was something seriously wrong. My right arm was like a balloon and the skin had gone completely yellow.

The raised bumps around my wrist were filled with pus.

'I'm taking you to A&E,' said Jim in a panic.

We left the girls with Mark,

My hubby reckons I'm as tough as old boots... but this really hurt!



I had emergency surgery



My horror-film arm

it releases toxins that damage nearby tissue.

I turned to Jim. His face had gone grey.

'I don't understand...'

I muttered, unable to take it in.

'If we don't get you down to theatre immediately you're going to die,' said the doctor, putting a drip into my hand as he spoke. 'We've got to work quickly.'

I burst into tears.

'I'm scared, Jim,' I cried, as the nurse helped me into a hospital gown.

'It's going to be OK,' Jim soothed. But I couldn't stop shaking as he held my hand.

Within 20 minutes, I was being led down to theatre.

'I love you,' I heard Jim say as the anaesthetic kicked in and I drifted off.

During the two-hour operation, medics worked hard to remove all of the infected skin and tissues from inside my arm.

That night, I came round.

'I need painkillers,' I gasped to the nurse, in agony.

'The infection has gone,' said my doctor. 'But I'm afraid we've had to remove a lot of the arm.'

I didn't want to see what was left of it, but when nurses changed the bandages, I caught a glimpse and gasped.

It was horrifying.

All the flesh and skin tissue had been cut out, leaving just the bare tendons and bone held together by muscle.

I felt sick as I watched the muscle moving. With no skin covering my flesh, I looked

like Freddy Krueger!

'Just cut my arm off,' I sobbed in disgust.

But my doctor told me I'd be going down for another operation in a few weeks, so they could reconstruct my arm using a combination of synthetic skin and skin from my thigh.

'You're lucky to be alive,' he said. 'If it had been your left arm, it could have reached your heart very quickly and we wouldn't have been able to save you.'

By the time Jim came later that day, I'd forced myself to put on a brave face about what had happened.

It didn't make any sense that an insect bite could cause so much destruction, but I had to face up to it.

'You're strong,' Jim reassured me. 'You're going to get through this.'

I didn't want the kids to see me like this, even though I missed them terribly.

But after my reconstructive surgery, Jim brought them in to hospital.

Alisha and Freya rushed over to give me a hug, but little Charlie stood at the back of the room looking unsure.

'Did a bug do that to you,

Mummy?' she asked.

'Yes, but it is a very rare bug,' I reassured her.

A week later, after starting physiotherapy to regain the movement in my arm, I celebrated my 48th birthday in hospital.

The kids put up a banner in my room, brought me a cake and a CD player to play music.

I sipped on a can of Pimm's and smiled - I was so lucky to still be here.

'What would we have done without you, Mum?' said Freya, reading my mind.

By now, I was learning to use my left hand to write and text on my phone, keeping my ravaged arm bandaged up.

It was too gruesome to show anyone.

After three weeks, I was discharged from hospital but it was another four months until I could return to work.

My arm still looked like something from a horror film, covered in stitches and the skin red raw.

For a while, I hid it away under long-sleeved tops, too ashamed to show people. But now, I don't care so much.

I recently got to meet the doctor who acted so quickly,

saving my arm and my life.

I couldn't thank him enough. I feel so grateful to be here.

And I've accepted my 'Freddy Krueger' arm.

It might not look pretty, but it's part of who I am.

A reminder to make the most of my second chance.

I couldn't thank the doctor enough - I feel so grateful

Now: just glad to be here

and our friend Gavin, 44, drove us to nearby St Peter's Hospital in Chertsey.

Still in my pyjamas, I could barely stand, so the nurse looking after me led me straight to a hospital bed, where a doctor examined my arm.

'I'm afraid this is very serious, Mrs Dinning,' the doctor said. 'It looks as though the insect bite has caused a bacterial infection we call necrotising fasciitis.'

He said that it was known as a flesh-eating bug because



A big cuddle from my girls!

Your Deals of the week

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

Blades of glory

Wilkinson Sword have unveiled their latest razor, with its brand-new bidirectional blade technology. In layman's terms, you can now seamlessly shave back and forth effortlessly with its movable head. It's half price (RRP £11.99) until 11 June.

OUR TOP TIP



Best Eton on a hot day!

Eton mess is a fabulously British summer pud, and Kelly's of Cornwall have taken this sweet and transformed it into their Berry Eton Mess Ice Cream. It's only £2 in Sainsbury's (usually £3.99) until 12 June.



Crunch time

Crisps are the ultimate party snack, and you can dig in for less this week as Tyrell's sharing bags are only £1 at Co-op (usually £2.39) until 6 June.

Dead good!

Hedrin Once is clinically proven to kill lice and eggs with just one 15-minute treatment. Hedrin is currently offering £5 off (RRP £18.50) in Boots stores nationwide and online at boots.com until 19 June.



Lovely bubbly

Fillipo Sansovino Prosecco is a deliciously soft and appley Prosecco from Italy. These bargain bubbles are perfect as an aperitif or with light fish and pasta dishes. It's only £7 at Asda (usually £9.98) until 13 June.



OFFER OF THE WEEK



Be smart and be gorgeous

Buy any product from the Phil Smith Be Gorgeous range for just £2.50 from Sainsbury's until 12 June. Products include Big It Up! Conditioner, Cocolicious Shampoo and Total Treat Argan Oil Cream.

Perfect pie

This luxury Smoked Haddock & King Prawn Fisherman's Pie from Boxed has an Italian-style Parmesan-and-herb white sauce, and is made with sustainably sourced smoked haddock and king prawns. The Boxed ready meals are fast-frozen to lock in freshness and contain no additives, artificial colours or flavours. It's down to £5 at Tesco (usually £7) until 4 June.



SAVING OF THE WEEK

Scent to please you...

Kiss Air Candles are offering *Pick Me Up!* readers a fantastic 20% off when you order online. Quote PMU at checkout at kiss-air.com until 14 June.



Your Brainwaves...

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

Tip of the Week

Let there be light!

Illuminate your whole tent by propping a torch against an empty water bottle. It makes a much brighter light for the tent.

Sian Walker, Halesowen



Tan-tastic

Never worry about getting fake tan all over your bed sheets again by rubbing talcum powder on your body before bed.

Margaret Anderson, Sunderland



Top Mum's Tip!

Frozen fingers

Cut off the finger from an old glove and slide on an ice pole. It will keep your little one's hands warm and free of sticky mess.

Anne Jones, Anglesey



Bowled over

Keep fruit fresher longer by turning an old colander into a fruit bowl. The circulating air slows the rotting process.

A Cairns, Colchester, Essex



Off the rack

Use an old letter rack to store palettes of make-up. It keeps things neat and tidy and you won't have to rummage for them ever again.

Kayla Maddocks, Waltham Cross



Desk delights

Rock on

Make your own paperweights by decorating some pebbles with pretty embellishments. Cute, easy and great to keep or give as presents.

Tina Williams, Ebbw Vale

Making her MARK

When Claire Dunbar, 49, from Widnes, gave birth to her daughter, she feared for her future. But Beth had other ideas...



Cradling my newborn baby, I was exhausted, but so happy.

Beth arrived on 6 October 1997, weighing 4lb 11oz.

As I stroked her face, it was love at first sight.

But there was something else. And the more I looked, the surer I was...

Beth had almond-shaped eyes – a tell-tale sign of Down's syndrome.

I'd refused the test during my pregnancy. Aged 29, the risks were low. And as a midwife, I saw newborns every day. I had enough knowledge to have no fear.

'I'm going to love my baby

regardless,' I'd thought.

But now, though there was no mistaking the ferocious love I felt as I cradled Beth, there was sadness, too. For the life she'd never lead.

When my parents – Eric, now 83, and Margaret, 79 – arrived at hospital to meet their new granddaughter, I came straight to the point.

'I think she's got Down's. Will you still love her?' I asked.

'Of course we will,' Mum said.

Relief. I needed to hear that. But I still had plenty to fear. 'She's likely to have heart defects, and her development will be slower,' the doctor said.

I felt protective, but scared, too. It was all so negative. No-one told me it'd be OK.

Afraid for the future, I imagined Beth growing up with no independence,

no friends, no birthday invites. It sent my spirits plummeting.

For the next few months, I suffered with postnatal depression. It took a long time to adjust to motherhood. As well as the sleepless nights and exhaustion, I was trying to become more accepting of Beth's diagnosis.

When she was 7 months, I felt the darkness begin to lift, started enjoying time with her.

And by the time of her first birthday, I wondered why I'd ever felt so low.

We bonded, I watched her personality develop. Beth was a happy baby, which helped.

I returned to work in October 1998, and as part of my midwife job, I provided counselling for couples deciding if they wanted the screening test for Down's syndrome.

I also helped people who'd had a positive screening, and knew their child did have the syndrome.

When I'd tell them I had a girl with the disability, they felt reassured.

But sometimes, I had to keep my personal experience to myself.

Soon after returning to work, I met a woman as she weighed up her options...

'I wouldn't want a baby like that,' she said. 'People

who bring a child like that into the world are selfish.'

Blood boiling, I asked a colleague to take over.

But I realised I was in a position to re-educate people. There was so much negativity surrounding the condition, but Beth taught me how wrong people were.

Her strong character came through early on. She didn't learn to walk until she was 2, would communicate using Makaton sign language, had regular physiotherapy sessions.

Determined, she never let it hold her back.

Just before Beth's third birthday, I sent her to a mainstream nursery. I didn't know her full potential, but I wanted her to have the same opportunities as other kids, live as normal a life as possible.

It was important for other children, too, to understand everyone's not the same.

In July 2001, I had a little boy, Tom.

As Beth continued into mainstream primary school, any fears I'd had about her 'lonely life' were soon quashed.

Beth had so many friends, she was constantly going to parties and on play dates.

'Can I have friends round for a sleepover?' she'd grin.

'Of course!' I'd say.

By the time she was 12, Beth insisted on going to the same



Baby Beth - and right, with me and Tom



TATT'S THE WAY TO DO IT!



Pain? Pah!
Big thanks to artist Mark

secondary school as her friends. I was sceptical – she'd be their first pupil with Down's syndrome.

But when the teachers showed support, I agreed.

For the first couple of years, Beth coped well. But as she grew up, I saw the gap widen between her and her peers.

Beth got GCSEs in English, Art, Home Economics and PE. I was so proud, but knew it was time to make changes.

For sixth form, Beth chose a smaller college, Petty Pool, for young people with learning difficulties.

'I've met a nice boy at college,' she said one day, excitedly.

'Have you now?' I smiled.

Beth had found her first boyfriend!

She loved college – and last September, she started working towards a qualification in Animal Management.

I wanted to pay tribute to my incredible girl.

So in January this year, I decided to get a tattoo – three arrows. It's the international symbol representing the Lucky Few – the name for those with Down's syndrome.

Online, I'd seen people in

America who'd done it, loved the sentiment behind it.

So I created an event on Facebook, to gauge response.

A lot of parents and friends were on board to get one too!

Some members of the group offered to help, contacting a few local tattoo parlours. Three of them readily agreed – Church Street Tattoo, LA Tattoo and Gentleman George's Tattoo Parlour.

When I told Beth, her eyes lit up.

'I'm getting one too!' she said.

I wasn't sure if she'd be able to handle the pain.

'We'll see,' I said.

But Beth, now 20, knows what she wants. There was no way she was letting it go.

As the day approached, her persistence continued.

On 17 March, as Down's Syndrome Awareness Week approached, we drove to Church Street Tattoo in Runcorn.

I was nervous, knew it would hurt. I hoped Beth would get there and change her mind!

We got there early, at 9am, to help with the organising. As people started arriving, the atmosphere was buzzing – as well as the tattoo needles!

There were 42 of us in total,

spread between the three tattoo parlours. Beth and her friend were the only two with Down's syndrome who were getting it done.

The tattoo parlour had dedicated two of their artists for us, and LA Tattoo down the road closed for other business.

A bag of nerves, I went first. As the machine started, my stomach churned.

I couldn't watch as the artist tattooed my right arm.

I can't lie – it hurt!

Beth watched me squirm, giggled at my fear.

Luckily, it was over in 10 minutes.

A friend went next, then it was Beth's turn. She wanted it done everywhere, on her arm, neck, even her forehead! But we convinced her to get it on the outside of her right arm, like everyone else.

As she took her seat, everyone crowded round, camera phones ready to record the moment.

She grinned, lapped up the attention.

Beth barely flinched

Now we're a tribe, with the same symbol on our arms



Snap!
Me and my incredible girl

Your Health

INSTANT appointment

With Doctor Arabella Onslow



A significant emotional reaction after adverse events is normal, but to prevent it destabilising your background mental health, you must be well-supported over the next few months to monitor your healing.

Any substantial shifts in your baseline state can then be quickly acted upon.

Pregnancy medication

Q I work in a nursing home and a resident has scabies. I'm pregnant and reluctant to use the medication that's been prescribed to us all. What's your advice?

Philippa, Enfield

A Scabies is contagious and the rash takes up to eight weeks to appear after infestation, although the itch is present early. There is a safe treatment in pregnancy if exposure was significant.

Bipolar relapse

Q I have bipolar disorder, which is controlled. But I had a traumatic experience. Should I change my medication?

Samantha, Folkestone

Am I hooked on codeine?

Q I often get diarrhoea and the GP prescribed codeine, which has helped. But now I'm worried that I'm hooked on it. Is there an alternative?

Dannielle, Southampton

A Codeine is extremely addictive and may impair performance, including driving. But there may be a suitable alternative that will be less addictive. See your doctor for information.



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. **EMAIL:** pickmeup@timeinc.com

Health On Twitter [Follow me @DrBellyButton](#)



TRUE
or
FALSE

Gastritis

1 It occurs when the lining of the stomach becomes inflamed.

True False

2 Many people with gastritis caused by a bacterial infection don't show symptoms.

True False

3 Gastritis is always caused by infection.

True False

4 You can't treat the condition yourself.

True False

1 TRUE It develops after the stomach has been damaged and is a relatively common condition.

2 TRUE However, for some it causes indigestion, pain and nausea. With erosive gastritis, where the stomach lining has worn away, symptoms can include bleeding or an ulcer.

3 FALSE It can be caused by regularly taking painkillers, excessive use of alcohol, a stressful event or an autoimmune reaction.

4 FALSE Eat smaller meals, more frequently, avoid irritating foods, cut down on alcohol and try to manage stress in your life.

SM INS

Pregnant with twins, Selma Abbey, 36, from Bexleyheath, had an odd symptom...

Touching my jaw, I felt a twinge of pain. It was 18 February 2011, and I was 36 weeks pregnant with twins.

The left side of my jaw had suddenly started to feel tender and uncomfortable, and my ears were ringing.

At dinner with my husband Andrew, 33, and our then 18-month-old daughter Ayla, I realised I couldn't close my mouth around the fork either.

I went to the mirror and was horrified to see the left side of my face had dropped!

'I'm having a stroke!'

I panicked. Leaving Ayla with family, Andrew rushed me to Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

A stroke was soon ruled out,

80%

...that's the percentage of NHS tonsillectomies (tonsil-removal ops) in England has fallen between 1991 and 2014, according to scientists from Public Health England.

SMILING SIDE

but I was told I had Bell's palsy. 'It's temporary facial paralysis and should get better by itself in a few months,' the doctor said.

There was no known cause or cure, I just had to get on with it. I was heartbroken.

Due to give birth in a few weeks, I'd set my heart on the perfect family photo, smiling and holding a baby in each arm.

No chance of that now! I gave birth to Ella and Leya on 5 March – and so, back home, my facial troubles took a back seat to looking after my girls. But it was



Family photo: me, Andrew and our girls

tough as I couldn't close my mouth, had to hold my hand up to my face while eating.

I bit my cheek so much and needed to drink using a straw.

My left eye was always wide open. And, unable to pronounce Bs and Ps, I'd speak slower so people could understand me.

I was self-conscious, too. Twins draw lots of attention – but with my droopy face, I just wanted to hide away. The opposite to my usual chatty self.

I was even embarrassed to look at Andrew.

'You're beautiful,' he'd tell me. By December, nine months since the onset, there were still no improvements.

I also had involuntary facial movements, like my left eye closing whenever I yawned or bit down.

My GP referred me to a specialist. I was told the uncontrolled movements were due to synkinesis, where facial muscles become too tight.

'You'll never get full control back,' the specialist told me.

My old face was gone forever...

I went into meltdown. So I had physio to regain some control and got Botox injections every four months to loosen my facial muscles.

I was also put in touch with



Physio has helped...

the Facial Palsy UK charity and I joined a support group.

Meeting other patients showed me that I wasn't alone.

I volunteered and offered support to other sufferers.

I also posted make-up tips for people with facial palsy on YouTube.

And, this March, I was proud to help

launch a support group for facial palsy in pregnancy.

I don't want anyone else to feel alone like I did.

I may never get my old face back, but I'll do all I can to help others find their smile again.

I wanted to hide away – the opposite to my usual chatty self

FACIAL PALSY

Facial palsy is a weakness of the facial muscles that can result in temporary or permanent nerve damage. When a facial nerve is non-functioning or missing, the muscles don't receive the necessary signals from the brain, which causes paralysis in the affected part of the face. Visit facialpalsy.org.uk for more information.

Men's health

With Dr Arabella Onslow



Q I'm prone to foreskin infections, so retract my foreskin to clean it. I'm worried my son will have the same problem. I've tried to retract his foreskin but it won't go back properly.

A The foreskin isn't fully retractable until 10 years old – so don't try to retract it! There's no need to do anything if your son has no symptoms. Once the foreskin is retractable, simply advise him about usual hygiene.

What's normal, what's not



Dry lips

Dry, sore or cracked lips are normal and can occur when exposed to the sun, wind or cold air. However, see your GP if you think they may be infected and he or she might prescribe an antibiotic or antifungal cream to treat the infection.

The

WOMAN HUNTER

Basil Borutski stole three lives in one morning. But why?

Basil Borutski had a troubling record where women were concerned. It started with his mother Beatrice. Said to be domineering, she ruled the house with a rod of iron.

'She didn't treat [Borutski] well - that was well known,' a friend claimed.

Years later, when he was an adult, it was Borutski himself who was a terrifying presence in the home.

In 1982 he married Mary Ann Mask and they had three daughters.

Within three years of their marriage, Borutski appeared in court in Ontario, Canada, charged with domestic assault against his wife.

He was acquitted.

In 1994, he was back in court, accused of more of the same violence against Mary.

Once again, he was found not guilty.

But the truth of what Mary lived through at the hands of her husband came to light in 2008 when she finally had the strength to walk away from her marriage.

Divorce proceedings were started and Mary told a judge that Borutski 'destroyed her spirit by relentless threats and abuse'.

One of their daughters told a hearing she witnessed hair-pulling, slapping and an attempt to push Mary out of a moving vehicle.

Another daughter said her



Carol



Anastasia



Nathalie

father repeatedly threatened to burn down the family home.

Borutski claimed he was the innocent victim of false allegations by a vindictive wife.

In 2011, Borutski met a new girlfriend. Nathalie Warmerdam was a hospice nurse for Borutski's ill father.

Soon after, Borutski moved into the farmhouse Nathalie shared with her two children.

Smitten, Nathalie believed

everything Borutski told her about his messy divorce, and she even advocated for him during the proceedings.

But the courts sided with Mary and ordered Borutski to pay a \$92,000 settlement (around £70,000).

Borutski's new relationship with Nathalie was a chance for a fresh start. But in 2012, police were called after he threatened to strangle her young son and made threats against the family dog.

Borutski was sent to prison but was released on 8 January 2013, after serving just 30 days.

Months later, Borutski met recently widowed Carol Culleton. They began a fling.

But soon, he'd started yet another relationship. At 36, Anastasia Kuzyk was more than

20 years younger than Borutski. She worked as an estate agent and a server at a nearby tavern.

On 30 December 2013, the police were called to Anastasia's home after Borutski became violent. She said he'd beaten and choked her and burnt her childhood possessions, including an old rocking horse.

She later told an investigating officer, 'I honestly thought he was going to kill me. I could see the switch go off in his eyes.'

Borutski was convicted of overcoming resistance by attempting to choke, suffocate or strangle, assault and mischief to property under \$5,000.

He was sent to prison.

But in December 2014, Borutski was released again.

He refused to sign a court



Borutski's shotgun

N R

Making of a MONSTER

Borutski: could
he have been
stopped earlier..?

order barring him from contacting Anastasia.

Put on probation, he was ordered to attend a domestic-violence prevention programme, but didn't go.

In spring 2015, Borutski moved into a new apartment.

Soon after, he tried to rekindle his relationship with Carol Culleton.

He offered to do odd jobs for her at her cottage. Then started turning up unexpectedly.

Once, he built a deck for her without

asking. Another time, he ripped up a flowerbed after Carol sat on another man's knee during a get-together at the house.

By September 2015, Carol

had had enough. She called him and ended their friendship.

But over the next few days, Borutski bombarded her with phone calls and text messages.

On 20 September, Carol texted him to say she was in a relationship with another man.

Please don't bother me, she told him.

The following day, Borutski confronted Carol at her home.

Later that night, he told neighbours he'd caught his girlfriend in bed with another man.

He seemed agitated.

Neighbours said he stayed up drinking and quoting passages from the Bible.

He told one neighbour, 'This is the Bible I believe in and I am

going to show it to the judge.'

That night, he fell asleep with the Bible in his hand.

At 7.36am the next morning, Borutski left his apartment. He was wearing camouflage gear.

As if he was going hunting.

Grabbing a sawn-off shotgun, Borutski drove 12 miles to Carol's house, smashing the glass door pane with his elbow and forcing his way in.

Filled with rage, he wrapped a TV cable around Carol's neck and strangled her to death.

After, he smoked a cigarette, emptied Carol's purse and drove away in her Mazda.

Borutski went straight to Anastasia's house.

When she saw him heading towards her, she screamed.

Her sister ran towards the

doorway and saw Borutski fetch the shotgun from Carol's car.

She was helpless as he shot her sister in the neck.

Leaving Anastasia to die, he got back in the car and drove 19 miles through back roads to the farmhouse he once shared with Nathalie Warmerdam and her children.

Undetected, he calmly walked through the door.

When Nathalie saw him, she started to run, but it was too late. He aimed his gun and shot her in the neck.

Evil Borutski had stolen the lives of three of his exes in the space of just one morning.

After the killing spree, he pulled into a lay-by and reportedly shouted out loud, 'God, I don't know why you wanted me to do that, but there must be a reason.'

Police launched a huge manhunt to find Borutski.

They feared he had more targets on his checklist.

By 12pm, they'd contacted his brother Arthur.

They engaged Borutski in a conversation by text.

Yes I did it, he wrote. *The guilty have paid... justice finally... I'm tired.*

At around 2pm, with a police helicopter circling overhead, Arthur began relaying police instructions to his brother by text.

Hands up. No gun, one message read.

Borutski walked out into a field as the tactical-aid unit surrounded him.

He was finally arrested.

At his trial last November, Basil Borutski, 60, pleaded not guilty to two counts of first-degree murder and one count of second-degree murder.

A videotaped interview was played at his trial.

'I killed them because they were not innocent,' Borutski said. 'They were guilty. I was innocent. I've done nothing wrong.'

After 14 hours of deliberation, the jury found him guilty of all charges.

Borutski was sentenced to life in prison with no chance of parole for 70 years.

He will die behind bars.

Perhaps if he had been put there after his first attacks on Mary, three lives might have been spared...

**He stayed
up drinking
and quoting
passages
from the
Bible**

Genius Or TOTALLY BONKERS?

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

Pepsi Lip Balm, £2.50, Primark

Designed to look exactly like a cup of the bubbly stuff, this cola-flavoured lip balm is perfect for anyone who loves fizzy drinks.



Verdict:
BONKERS!

...the packaging is pretty cool, though.

Nivea Sunshine Love Caring Shower Gel, £1.99, Ocado

If, like us, you love the smell of sun cream, try this delicious shower gel! It's designed to give you that summer-holiday scent all year round and smells just like the real deal.



Verdict:
GENIUS!

What a pick-me-up in the morning!

Westlab Himalayan Pink Salt Lamp, £24.99, westlabsalts.co.uk

This hand-carved lamp gives off a warm, red light to help you relax. Even better, its red glow can offset the blue light from your phone and TV, to stop it upsetting your body clock.

Verdict:
GENIUS!

Looks great and it's good for your well being.



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.**

1	25	22	15	5		22	7	19	1	5		19	
17		17		1		9		6		7	10	7	19
17	15	25	9	25	1	10	1	23		21		17	
1		1		25		23		23	6	22	9	25	7
23	1	10		1	23	20	24	5				7	
		7		9		22		7	13	2	6	22	7
2	6	25	25	7	5	9		22		25		22	
	5		15				1	22	2	7	9	20	2
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	26		24		15		24	1	22	17	20	5	24
18	7	17	3	10	25		15		7		8		
	5				2	15	6	5	9		17	1	19
22	9	15	19	24	7		23		9		25		6
	16		6		25	7	1	19	20	5	7	22	22
14	6	5	4		7		22		5		22		4
	23		7	1	25	9	3		24	6	22	9	10

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
A												
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
			P		D							

PRIZE ANSWER

2	15	5	26	7	25	9
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Your Dilemmas

Stuck for what to do? Write to Pick Me Up! for some good advice



Should I ignore their friendship?

Deborah,
31, Hull

Last week, I discovered that my husband of 11 years has been texting another woman behind my back for the last 18 months. I hit the roof when I found out. The texts weren't flirty, but there were a lot of them. He's never mentioned her before, but insists they're just friends.

Talking to his family, it seems everyone knows about this woman except me, and they think I'm making a fuss. But he won't tell me anything more about their friendship, saying I wouldn't understand.

Our marriage has been great for years, but I just don't feel like I can trust him any more. Should I ignore the texts and move on with my life and marriage as before?



YES

Pick Me Up!
reader Hannah Burke says, 'I'd

ignore the texts. I'm sure there are aspects of your life and friendships that your husband doesn't know about - not because you've anything to hide, but because there's no reason he needs to know. If the texts aren't flirty, why worry? If the exchanges were with another guy, would you be concerned?

'Don't let this drive a wedge between you. Move on and forget about it.'



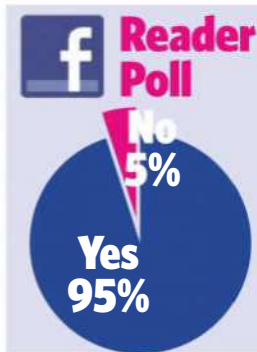
NO

Pick Me Up!
reader Chrissy Russell says,

'I don't think you should ignore it - there should be no secrets in a marriage. It sounds like he's using you as the excuse for keeping quiet. If he thought

you wouldn't accept it, then he shouldn't be doing it.

'What's wrong with talking to someone else you both know, like a friend or family member, if he needs anything? This all seems a bit secretive and dodgy to me!'



Ditch my sponging mate?

Alison
28, Exeter

My best friend from school went through a nasty divorce three years ago. Her ex took everything, so I loaned her money and settled her in a flat.

Now she spends all her cash from odd jobs on herself and still sponges off me. I have kids and a job, and am struggling to make ends meet. But she keeps playing the divorce card and crying. Is it time I ditched her?



YES

Pick Me Up!
reader Michelle Slinn says, 'Yes.

If you've mentioned it before and she's still doing it, then she's not a true friend. The fact she's happy to take money off you when you've kids to support is quite selfish - especially when she spends all her spare money on herself.

'It sounds like she's making excuses to me. Relationships are about give and take. Move on and find yourself a mate worthy of your friendship.'



NO

Pick Me Up!
reader Rachael Camborne

Paynter says, 'I don't think you need to ditch her. You've shown yourself to be a true friend, but if she asks for money in future, just explain again that you are now short of funds yourself. If she's a true friend to you, she'll understand that you have to put your family first.

'Could you help her look for a permanent job? That way, you'll still be helping and supporting her without losing any more of your money.'

ADVICE LINES

● Struggling with debt or need some advice about your finances? Call the

National Debtline: 0808 808 4000.

● For help with budgeting and loans advice, visit gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits

to check if you're eligible.

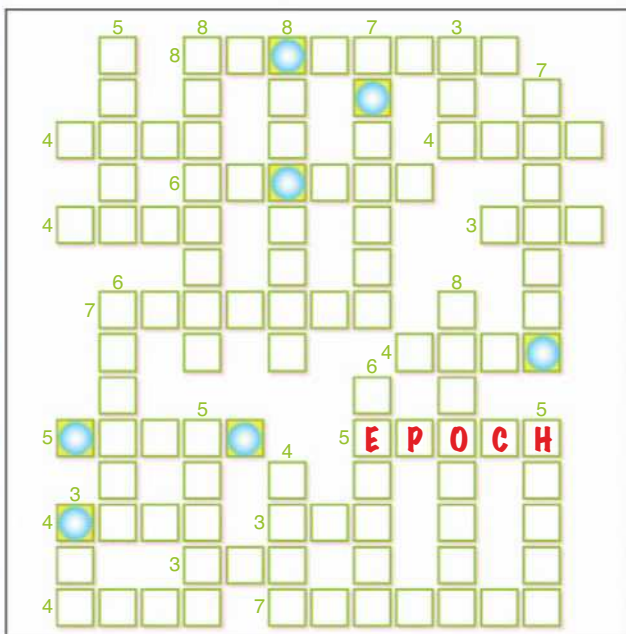
● Feel like your marriage is under strain and you need some counselling? Contact ReGain at regain.us.

WIN £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 | 4 letters | Two | 6 letters | 7 letters | 8 letters |
| Act | Butt | 5 letters | Deceit | Ketchup | Demotion |
| Ale | Hemp | Attic | Ordeal | Runaway | Mandrake |
| Kit | Kilo | Epoch | Wanton | Tetanus | Smoothie |
| Rat | Knot | Haiku | | Whiskey | Sombrero |
| Rep | Rapt | Humus | | | |
| | Taco | Intro | | | |

WIN £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.

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

The UNB

Although Emma Lincoln, 40, from Preston, knew this was no ordinary pregnancy, she could never have guessed the battle ahead...

I couldn't sit still. Just one more minute and I'd know. It was October 2012, and I was awaiting the results of my home-pregnancy test. *Be positive!* I prayed. I had a daughter, Poppy, then 3, but longed for another baby. My husband, Christian, 37, and I had been trying for a year without any luck. Well, that wasn't quite true. I'd been pregnant twice, but miscarried both times. But as I looked at the test, joy rippled through me. 'I'm pregnant,' I told Christian that afternoon and he pulled me in to a tight hug.

worriedly at Christian. The doctor recognised the problem immediately. 'Your twins may be experiencing twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome, but we aren't certain,' he said. If that was the case, it meant my babies were sharing a placenta but not getting an equal supply of blood. 'There's a risk the smaller twin could die in the womb,' I was told. But that didn't mean the bigger twin was safe. Because their blood circulation was connected, if the smaller twin died there was a significant risk the bigger

I refused to buy toys or clothes - didn't want to tempt fate

twin could die or suffer brain damage. 'We'll need to monitor you closely,' I was told. 'I could lose both my babies,' I wept. Terrified, I refused to buy toys or clothes for the twins, even after we discovered I was carrying girls. *Don't want to tempt fate.* Regular checks showed twin two was still struggling, while twin one thrived. Meanwhile, I grew depressed, refused to socialise. And I couldn't face any questions about my babies. The thought of people cooing and pulling excited faces made me miserable. Poppy would poke at my belly, excited to be a big sister. That broke my heart - she

But I had this inkling that I was carrying twins... Then, at 8 weeks, stomach pains sent me rushing for an emergency scan. 'Everything is looking fine,' the sonographer said. 'So they're both OK?' I said. 'I mean, it is twins?' The sonographer looked shocked. 'Yes, it is,' she said. Christian was shocked, as I hadn't mentioned my inkling. We were about to be outnumbered. And it felt great! I had another scan, just four weeks later. This time the sonographer looked concerned. 'Twin two is looking a bit small,' she explained. As the sonographer went off to find a doctor, I glanced

BREAKABLE bond

**I got you, sis!
That's Mollie
on the left**



**Princesses:
Snow White
Mollie (left)
and Ariel Maisie**

might never get to meet them.

'My priority is to make sure you're OK,' I told my babies.

So at 24 weeks, I was signed off from my job as a customer adviser at a bank, to rest.

I'd felt both twins kicking, but I still couldn't get excited.

By now, I was going for scans twice a week.

While twin two was still small, thankfully twin one was developing normally.

'Please hang on in there,' I whispered to them both.

But at 28 weeks, I could no longer feel twin two kicking.

I knew who was where from scans - twin one was on the right and twin two on the left.

'I haven't felt anything on my left for a while,' I told my doctor.

I was so scared.

Had I already lost one baby? And if so, did that mean my other baby was going to die? Or suffer terrible brain damage?

They whisked me straight in for a scan.

'We need to get these babies

out right now,' a doctor said.

I was feeling sick with fear as I was taken in for an emergency Caesarean.

With Poppy at nursery and Christian by my side, we prepared to meet our newborns.

But will my babies make it out alive?

I heard a little cry as twin one Mollie came out first.

The bigger twin, she weighed 1lb 15oz.

Just moments later, little Maisie had also arrived.

Smaller, she weighed just 1lb 2oz.

She was alive though! 'They're so tiny!' I gasped.

But my heart was full of hope. They'd made it!

Both were hurried away and put in incubators. I didn't even get to hold them.

But I held them in my heart. 'Please fight!' I willed them.

Finally, the next day, I was able to see my babies.

I felt overwhelmed with love. And, when I saw little Maisie,

I just felt so proud.

The tiniest twin, she'd fought so hard to stay alive, saving not just herself but her sister, too.

If Maisie had gone, I could also have lost Mollie.

'My brave girls,' I whispered. After 14 weeks, we were allowed to bring Mollie home.

Usually they like to keep twins together, but Maisie was still so poorly.

It felt strange having a baby in the house again.

'I'd really forgotten how exhausting this is,' I said to Christian one night during a midnight feed.

'Wait until Maisie's home, too,' he joked.

I laughed but I also felt so guilty.

She needs to be here with her mummy and her twin, I thought.

Thankfully, after five months, Maisie was well enough to come home.

The girls still had to be monitored, but their bond was instant.

As they babbled away to one another in baby gibberish, I imagined Mollie saying, 'Where have you been? I've missed you!'

And it was really from that moment on, that wherever one went, the other was

never very far behind.

They'd hold hands and cuddle up in their sleep.

Proper little best friends. While they both need growth-hormone injections, they're doing really well.

Maisie is a bit on the small side still, but is quickly catching up on Mollie.

My second pregnancy was probably one of the hardest things that I've ever had to go through.

But seeing both my girls happy and healthy has been doubly rewarding.

Yes, we're outnumbered now - but that's just fine by us!



**Us girls: with
big sis Poppy**

37

20

23

Pick Me Up!
Bingo

My double

JACKPOT

Susanne was thrilled to scoop a big win, but couldn't believe it when it happened a second time...

Susanne Westwood, 50, Powys



20

Rubbing the hair dye into a lather on my head, I sat on the toilet seat while it set.

It was November 2015. My partner Julian, 45, was downstairs watching TV.

So, while I waited for the colour to take, I decided to enjoy a few games of bingo on my phone. I'd

joined Pick Me Up! Bingo four years before after my daughter, 29, had recommended it.

'It's fun,' she told me. And she was right. It was entertaining and it was a great bit of me time.

Just like now. As I perched on the toilet seat, I bought a few tickets for Sapphire – it was my

favourite game.

I sat watching as the games played out.

Then I realised I only needed one number to win the £1,000 jackpot.

A few minutes passed, and then...

'Bingo!' I shouted as my number was called.

Then a message flashed up on the screen telling me that I was the winner. I couldn't

JACKPOT WINNER!

Ms. Susanne W
One Thousand Pound

7

Would they jet off on a holiday?



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23

believe it – £1,000. I was amazed. I was so desperate to run and tell Julian the good news. But by now, it was time to wash the dye out of my hair.

As soon as I'd rinsed it off, I threw my hair up into a towel and ran downstairs, taking them two at a time.

'You won't believe it...' I began, as Julian carried on watching TV. 'I've just won £1,000 on the bingo.'

That certainly got his attention!

'You what?' he laughed, his eyes suddenly on me.

I showed him my phone and

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11

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42

£1,000

11

Susanne was delighted with her bingo wins

JACKPOT WINNER!

Pay: *Susanne W*
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£2,721

his jaw dropped. 'Amazing!' he grinned.

With Christmas just around the corner, we decided to spend the cash on even more gifts for our four grandkids.

We bought them all sorts of toys, clothes and gadgets.

They were over the moon.

After such a lovely win, I never expected to scoop another big jackpot in 2017.

It was late one night, when I decided to play a few quick games of bingo before bed.

I bought some tickets for Bingo Lounge.

As my games ended, I got up

That night in bed, we chatted about what to spend the winnings on

to turn off my laptop. But just as I did, a message flashed up. I realised I'd won £2,721! I couldn't believe it. Julian was getting into bed, so I ran upstairs to tell him. 'Guess what, I've won again!'

I beamed. 'Yeah, right,' Julian replied, thinking I was pulling his leg. 'It's true!' I laughed. '£2,721!'

When the penny finally dropped, he couldn't stop smiling.

'This is unbelievable!' he chuckled.

That night in bed we spent an hour chatting about what to spend the winnings on...

A holiday, a

shopping spree, a designer handbag for me...

By the next morning though, we'd decided.

We're both house-proud, so we wanted to indulge in a brand-new cooker, plus a nice carpet for the lounge.

So, that's what we did.

And we even had enough money left over to treat ourselves to a new mobile phone each and a laptop.

Winning twice has been simply amazing.

I am so very happy with my Pick Me Up! Bingo wins. I never thought I'd be a double winner.

But here I am telling you my story.

I'm proof that it can happen to anyone.

37

20

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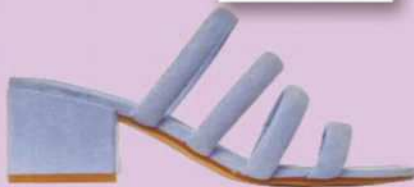


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**HELLO
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Lady in red

I couldn't tell if my little 3-month-old Poppy was trying to say 'hi' or give me a fist bump here.
Rosie Gaskell, Billinge



Just chillin'?

Don't think this is what 6-month-old JJ had in mind when I asked to hang out with him!

Lynn Savage, Stevenage



Angry eyes?

By the look on his face, 4-week-old Archie isn't very happy that it still isn't lunchtime yet...
Gemma Senior, Halifax

BREAST

of friends

Told that her dog was dying, Sara Page, 54, from Looe, Cornwall, really didn't think things could get any worse...

I was dozing on the sofa with my dog Freyja when an ad featuring a cat came on the telly and, before I knew it, Freyja had jumped in the air, like she always did whenever a moggy appeared on the screen, wallopping me in my left breast in the process.

'Ouch!' I cried. It really hurt! But Freyja, 9, a Border collie/Lab cross, was boisterous. My boob stung and it reminded me of something.

Better book that mammogram, I thought. It was February 2014. At 50, I was due a routine checkup.

So I called the GP to make an appointment, was told someone would be in touch.

But I heard nothing. Then, one afternoon back in August – as

I was scratching Freyja's belly – I stopped as, on the left side of her chest, I felt a large lump.

So then I ran my hand over her right side to check that I hadn't been mistaken.

On the right side, I felt something that was completely different.

There were lots of much smaller, pea-sized lumps scattered across that side of her chest.

I feared the worst... *Does she have cancer?*

'We need to take Freyja to the vet,' I told my husband Robert, 45.

A couple of days later, at the surgery, I was relieved when

the vet reassured me that there was nothing to worry about.

I was advised to go home, keep an eye on it – and if it grew, to make another appointment.

But I couldn't stop fretting... I went back to the vet's, asked them to remove the lumps.

'Just in case they're harmful to her,' I said.

The following week, Freyja had the op.

They would do one side at a time because it was so invasive.

First, she had the big lump removed from the left side of her chest.

It was really tough seeing her so weak and tired.

Then, the biopsy results came back.

Turns out Freyja had aggressive mammary carcinoma. In other words, breast cancer.

The vet said they wouldn't operate on the other side.

It was spreading so fast that it had reached



Poorly pooch: Freyja after her surgery



We're still going strong

Don't you just love a drooly kiss.?!



Big hugs all round!

round the garden, her tail wagging! Then, in

February 2015, Freyja went in for her second operation.

Amazingly, all the small lumps taken out of the right side of her chest were benign.

Still, Freyja wasn't given the all clear. We were told she had a little longer than six months, but no-one knew exactly.

When she came home, she seemed as happy as ever.

Meanwhile, in May 2015, I was finally called for my mammogram appointment.

I wasn't worried as we had no history of breast cancer in our family – but I just wanted to get the all-clear.

Then, two weeks afterwards, I was called back in for a second appointment.

Now I was nervous.

'You found something in my left breast, didn't you?' I asked out of the blue, remembering

the time Freyja had thumped me all those months back.

'Yes, we did,' the doctor said. 'But there's no way you could have known. The cells were too deep to tell from the outside.'

I was shocked, thought maybe that had been Freyja's way of trying to tell me.

It was aggressive, but still at stage zero – so early...

In June, I had surgery to remove the tumour from my left breast.

Biopsy results showed that it was more invasive than they first thought. It was starting to spread.

'I can't believe we've both got the same illness,' I wept to Freyja.

It seemed such a cruel coincidence.

In August 2015, I had my first chemo.

Robert came to all six appointments and Freyja waited outside in our van.

I hated all the needles, but loved knowing I'd see her as soon as I left the hospital.

I spent most of 2016 in and out of hospital, undergoing

radiotherapy and Herceptin treatment for breast cancer.

I'll be honest with you. It was absolutely terrifying.

Then I thought of Freyja. She'd been given six months to live – and that was almost two years ago.

'If she can beat this damn thing, I can too,' I vowed.

As an ex-sergeant in the US Air Force, I'm pretty tough!

As if Freyja knew, after every chemo session I had she'd lavish me with drooly kisses.

'Mum's hanging on in there,' I tell her, giving her a hug.

Last year, I was taken off the drugs and fought hard to regain my strength.

Recovering at home, Freyja was my constant companion.

It was as if she knew we'd been through the same ordeal.

Technically, though, Freyja does still have cancer.

Not that you'd know it.

I haven't got the all-clear yet, either.

But I'm hopeful.

Freyja turned 9 in December last year and is still full of life.

I'm convinced she beat the odds so she could save me!

As I recovered at home, Freyja was my constant companion

Doomed to

DIE

The doctor's words were stark. But could Zach Moore, 37, from Florida, make the changes needed to see his son grow up?



Just four or five years ago...

Smiling at my wife Amber, I offered her another slice of pizza. 'Tuck in!' I said, ploughing through my own gigantic helping. It was May 2007 and Amber had just found out she was pregnant.

'Well, if you're eating for two...!' I joked, patting my belly. It was the same every night. Large pizzas, a side of chips, and a fizzy drink, of course. I was addicted to cola, getting through at least six litres a day.

By now I was 27, and weighed 25st 1lb. Big for my height of 5ft 11in.

Funny thing is, I hadn't always been a fat. Just seven years earlier I'd been a healthy 12st 8lb.

But, after moving into my own place in the summer of 2002, and without my mum putting dinner on the table for me every night, I was suddenly free to eat whatever I wanted.

My weight crept higher and higher. And now, here I was, fatter than my pregnant wife!

When Zach was born in February 2008, I longed to be a great dad playing with my son.

But I could barely roll off the sofa and my office job didn't help. I barely did any physical

activity, and when I got home, I was too tired to do anything but lie in front of the telly.

As my belly ballooned, I was constantly at the GP – asthma, thyroid problems – all weight-related. But I kept eating badly and drinking fizzy pop.

By December 2013, I was a massive 35st 10lb.

Obese, almost immobile, I gave up my job. But my lifestyle didn't change.

As I turned 33, my health issues were worse than ever – and my doctor was blunt.

'If you don't lose weight, you'll die within the year,' he said.

I trembled in shock as he told me that my heart could stop at any time.

And my habits were rubbing off on Amber, too.

'Let's try diet pills,' I said to her in desperation, spotting an advert in a magazine.

They didn't work. Anxious and lacking any self-belief, I felt so trapped.

'It's hopeless,' I said to Amber. 'I'll never lose weight.' 'You can!' she encouraged.

But, spiralling into depression,

I believed that I was doomed.

I'd never lose all that weight. *I'd rather die than diet.*

So believing I'd no choice, I started making bleak plans.

'I want to capture as many happy family moments as possible,' I told Amber.

'So Zach will have something to remember me by.'

Both Amber and I were close to tears as she pressed record on the video camera.

Me and Zach, 5, sat on the sofa reading Dr Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham*.

'I love this story, Dad,' Zach said. 'You're good at stories.'

I held him tight.

I could see the pain in Amber's eyes as she silently watched us. It tore me apart.

Then, a couple of weeks before Christmas 2013, I got food poisoning.

For the first time in years, I couldn't eat.

After days hunched over the toilet, things got so bad, Amber drove me to hospital.

I was so embarrassed, my bulky form sprawled

across the hospital bed.

As I started to recover, the doctors weighed me.

I couldn't believe my eyes when I stepped on the scales.

I'd lost a whopping 3st 8lb in just under a month!

Maybe I could lose weight...

I suddenly realised I didn't want my son to grow up with a gravestone instead of a dad.

I was determined.

Returning home, Amber and I decided to cut out fast food for good.

'We can do this,' I said.

'There's one thing we need to get rid of

Anxious and lacking any self-belief, I felt so trapped



Capturing memories while I could

LIFE-CHANGING REAL LIFE



I don't even recognise myself now

I underwent a tummy tuck and a breast-reduction surgery.

I even had my nipples taken off and sewn back on in the right place.

'Daddy, you're on telly!' my son cried excitedly one day, dragging me into the living room.

Watching myself on TV, doing pre-surgery interviews about my gigantic form, was cringeworthy.

When my body was finally ready to be unveiled, I felt sick with nerves.

But I couldn't believe the difference when I looked at myself in the mirror afterwards for the first time.

I sobbed with relief as I took in the changes.

'You look incredible!' Amber said, smiling.

'And you're beautiful as always,' I replied through tears.

She'd lost weight, too, shedding over 5st by following my diet plan.

I still have loose skin at the tops of my thighs, and flaps under my arms.

Surgery to remove it would cost another £7,000 and we just don't have the money.

But, despite that, I'm definitely a changed man.

I now weigh 10st 10lb – which means I've shed over 25st in total.

I've dropped more clothes sizes than I can count, and I've even gone down three sizes in shoes – a side effect that I wasn't expecting!

When I look back now at the video I made in 2013, I don't even recognise myself.

I feel so sad when I look at that man, struggling to breathe as he sits on the sofa with his son.

Of course, it hasn't been an easy ride, and I still crave fast food every now and again.

I'll allow myself to have a cheat day once every couple of weeks – but, otherwise, I'm very strict with myself.

A few months ago, I was playing in the garden with Zach, who's now 10.

'I love skinny daddy much more than fat daddy,' he said, giving me a hug.

No amount of pizza in the world could ever make me feel better than that!

I've dropped so many clothes sizes – even three sizes in shoes!

right now,' she said, pouring away countless bottles of cola.

Within five months, I lost another 4st, but it still wasn't enough, so I started researching gastric bypass.

With me out of work, it meant scraping every penny we had to pay the £10,800.

'We'll have nothing left in our savings,' I said to Amber, worried.

'It doesn't matter,' she replied. 'You mean more to me than money.'

Thankfully, I qualified for the surgery, so in May 2014, I went for the op – yes, it was

risky. But so was carrying round all this weight.

After the surgery, the doctors challenged me to walk as far as I could down the hospital corridor.

I managed 42 steps before I was panting for breath.

Pitiful.

'It can't get any worse than this,' I told Amber firmly.

Returning home, I started to learn new recipes, heaving my huge bulk off the sofa to cook a meal.

With my gastric bypass, I couldn't eat much, but I

wanted to eat the right things.

Within 14 months, I'd shed 10st, started walking, then running short distances.

And Amber and I joined a gym.

Within another year, I'd shed a massive 18st 8lb in total.

However, as

the weight dropped off, my skin couldn't keep up.

The loose pouch of skin on my stomach sagged below my knees.

Though I was proud of how far I'd come, my body repulsed me.

I suffered with rashes and bruising, and I even had to lift up my stomach flap every time I went to the toilet.

Despite my issues with skin, I decided to post a picture of my weight-loss achievement on Instagram in the hope it'd inspire others.

A few days after my selfie, I got an interesting message.

It was from a producer at *The Doctors*, a US TV show dedicated to 'embarrassing' health problems.

It was offering to pay for my surgery and to remove my loose skin for free! Only the stomach area, but it was a start.

I said yes without a second thought and, in July 2015,



Skinny Daddy, happy Mummy

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My Jack Russell Poppy is the coolest pup-rocker of them all.

Jane Carter, Warwickshire



Small, but mighty!

Hugo thinks he rules the world! A very pampered puss indeed...

Adam Bradshaw, Halesowen



PET OF THE WEEK

Despite her very prickly appearance, my African pygmy hedgehog Squishy is so loveable!

Emma Richards, Newark



Always alert - that's my Chinese water dragon Toothless!

Louise Johnson, Leicester



This is turtle-y blissful

Queen of the castle! Daisy loves to get warm and cosy under her heat lamp.

Fiona Yule, Aberdeen



Look how tiny my puppy was. So, when it came to naming her, Minnie was the perfect monicker!

Aimee Barlow, Eastbourne



Life's a breeze, fur real!

PRESCRIPTION FOR ADDICTION

Why do more and more people seem to be getting hooked on painkillers?

Britain is facing a drug-addiction crisis, with hospital admissions involving overdoses almost doubling in the last decade.

But we're not talking about illegal substances such as heroin or cocaine. The drugs sending thousands into an abyss of addiction are those prescribed by our doctors.

Since 2007, there has been an 80 per cent increase in the number of opiates – a range of prescription drugs mainly used for pain relief – handed out in England.

Powerful painkillers such as tramadol and codeine are regularly prescribed. But with this respite from pain often comes a dependence on the feeling of numbness these drugs provide.

In the UK, there is said to be 200,000 problem users with a prescription-drug habit. And just like any other addiction, easing yourself from its grip is tough –

withdrawal symptoms can include both physical and psychological problems.

The tragic fall from grace of Ant McPartlin has brought the crisis under the media spotlight.

Ant, famous as part of comedy double act Ant and Dec, checked into rehab in 2017 after becoming addicted to tramadol following a knee op.

TV presenter Lorraine Kelly also opened up about the 'seductiveness' of tramadol, the drug she was prescribed after a horse-riding accident.

She chose to stop taking it, describing it as 'horrible because it's not real'.

Others haven't been as lucky to escape...

Singer Prince died

in 2016 after an accidental overdose of fentanyl, which he was reportedly using to manage chronic pain.

And deaths from addictive painkillers in Britain have almost doubled in the last decade.

Mum-of-two Nicki Hari, 50, became addicted to tramadol when she was just 18, after knee surgery left her with stiff and sore joints.

'It didn't just relieve my knee pain, it eased all of my muscles as well. A few months later, the knee pain returned and my condition was diagnosed as chronic,' says Nicki, from

Two thirds of those on 'dependence-forming medicines' are female, and typically in their 50s and 60s



Borehamwood, Hertfordshire.

'Each time, the GP gave me more tramadol,' she adds. Soon, I was automatically popping a pill in the morning and when I got home at night. When I started to run out, I booked an emergency appointment with my GP. And, when those pills ran out, I made an appointment with a different doctor.'

Nicki was then offered an alternative drug – codeine.

After a while, a GP refused to prescribe any further, but Nicki found other ways to feed her addiction. Legally, she started bulk-buying online – around 90 tablets per month for £60.

'Amazingly, I never considered myself an addict,' she says. 'I saw the tablets as a way to stay healthy. I didn't tell anyone how much I was taking. Instead, I stashed pills in handbags, in my car. Even my then partner didn't know.'

It wasn't until Nicki and her

WHAT ARE OPIATES?

Opiate or opioid painkillers are medicines with effects similar to opium. They are part of the same family of drugs as diamorphine, otherwise known as heroin. Opiate painkillers are available either from doctors on prescription, or over the counter at a pharmacy if it's a low dose. The following painkillers are all opioids – morphine, fentanyl, oxycodone, tramadol and codeine. These can all be habit forming and are intended to be used for a limited period of time to treat pain that does not respond to standard painkillers like aspirin, ibuprofen and paracetamol.



Lorraine and Ant have shared their stories

R
?
!



Falling into the drug trap

Here's what You say...



I think many prescription drugs are handed out too easily, and effects on patients are not sufficiently monitored. It doesn't help that doctors are under so much pressure, and 10-minute appointments are not long enough to discuss patients' problems properly. I am on a lot of prescribed medication that has increased gradually over many years. I fear that it will be impossible for me to become drug-free now.
Ann Johnson, Runcorn, Cheshire

partner began talking about starting a family that she cut back. She went down from 10 pills a day to four, and found happiness with the birth of her two sons.

But she had withdrawal symptoms - feeling lethargic and tearful and suffering night sweats and tremors.

'By the time I went back to work, I was feeling more vulnerable than ever. I got my husband to sign up for private healthcare so I could have minor operations, like wisdom-tooth removals, just to get a prescription.

'When I started suffering from insomnia, my GP prescribed the sleeping pill zopiclone. It became my new drug of choice.

'One day, I was so zoned out, I crashed into a skip while driving the boys to school. Luckily, no-one was hurt.

'By my late 30s, I was taking up to 20 painkillers and sleeping pills a day. I

rarely left my bed.'

But in September 2010, after more than 20 years of drug addiction, Nicki read a journal penned by her son, then 10, about his holidays. He'd written, *We didn't do anything because Mummy was ill in bed...*

It was then that Nicki booked herself into rehab.

She hasn't touched a prescription drug since.

So what's being done to stop people falling into the same trap as Nicki?

In January, an investigation was launched into the increase of prescription-drug addiction. Public Health England (PHE)

acted after it emerged that one in 11 patients treated by the NHS in 2017 was given a drug that can induce dependency.

The study results, which will make recommendations outlining what it thinks the government and NHS should



Nicki suffered for years

do to limit the problem, are not expected until early 2019.

PHE's Director of Alcohol, Drugs & Tobacco, Rosanna O'Connor, said, 'It's of real concern that so many people find themselves dependent on, or suffering withdrawal symptoms from, prescribed medicines. Many will have sought help for a health problem only to find later on they have a further obstacle to overcome.'

So what do you do if you think you're hooked?

The best starting point is your GP. Asking for help isn't easy - but it's vital. If you don't, the consequences can be fatal.

● For help, call the Frank drugs helpline on 0300 123 6600.

More does need to be done to control prescription medication. But, on the other hand, if you stop the medication for a genuinely ill person, it can have serious consequences...



Krystdena Cardwell, Leamington Spa, Warwicks

In my own experience, some doctors are too willing to give these drugs out on repeat prescription, so you don't need to try to get an appointment. Not all surgeries do this - some are very strict about drugs that will not be given on repeat. If there is any doubt if the drugs are genuinely required, doctors should assess the patient and find out whether they can cut down their prescription. It would also save the NHS a small fortune.



Christine Underwood, Woking, Surrey

Opiates cost the UK taxpayer a whopping £263 million in 2017

Look Amazing!

This week: Beauty with a heart

Klorane Aerosol-Free Dry Shampoo with Oat Milk, £9

Klorane is changing the world one tree at a time. As part of their Botanical Foundation, they're planting 10,000 trees a year in Africa, helping to provide food and jobs.

Burt's Bees Strawberry Lip Balm, £3.99, amazon.co.uk

As part of their campaign, #BringBackTheBees, Burt's Bees will plant 5,000 wildflower seeds for every limited-edition lip balm sold. It's important work - without bees, strawberries wouldn't exist!

EcoTools Sculpt Buki, £9.99, ecotools.com

Make-up brushes may not be the first thing to spring to mind when it comes to ethical beauty - but EcoTools' brushes are made from vegan-friendly synthetic fibres, and the handles are made from easily renewable bamboo.

Beauty Kitchen Sustainable Beauty Wipes, £5.99, Holland & Barrett

For every one of their Seahorse Plankton products sold, Beauty Kitchen donates a percentage of their profits to The Seahorse Trust to protect these magical creatures.

Look Good Feel Better Sculpting Sponge, £7.50, M&S

As the only worldwide cancer charity that helps women and teenagers manage the visible side effects of cancer treatment, Look Good Feel Better does wonders to boost people's confidence.

Charity Pot Hand & Body Lotion, £3.75, Lush

It's not just your skin that this rich moisturiser works wonders for - 100% of the price (minus taxes) goes to supporting small, grassroots organisations.

Shea Moisture Daily Hydration Conditioner, £10.99, sheamoisture.com

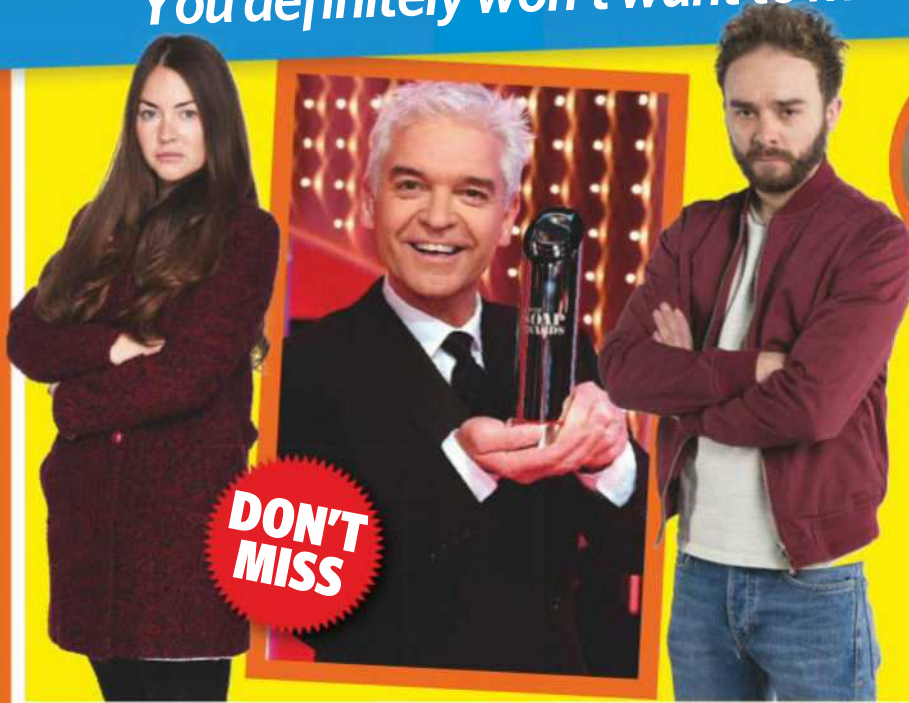
It's win-win! 10% of SheaMoisture sales go towards supporting women-led businesses or communities that supply ingredients for their products.

Organic Defence Hand Spray, £6.50, Neal's Yard

You can't say Neal's Yard isn't committed to making the beauty world a better place - 2018 marks 10 years since they became the first carbon neutral high street retailer.

Your telly Pick of the week

You definitely won't want to miss these TV treats



The British Soap Awards, ITV

For the first time ever, the British Soap Awards will be broadcast live from London's Hackney Empire with your fave soap stars on their best behaviour, nervously waiting to see if they've picked up a gong. Among those hoping for a win are Jack P Shepherd (*Corrie's* David), Lacey Turner (*EastEnders'* Stacey), Anna Passey (Sienna in *Hollyoaks*) and Ryan Hawley (Robert in *Emmerdale*). Phillip Schofield again hosts the glittering night.

Ackley Bridge, C4

The students and teachers of Yorkshire college Ackley Bridge are returning for a new series of the gritty drama. You can expect plenty of angst for put-upon headmistress Mandy, played by Jo Joyner (right), as she deals with yet more explosive fall outs and problem pupils. Sunetra Sarker is also back playing dinner lady and busy mum Kaneez.



Versailles, BBC2

The raunchy drama about French King Louis XIV is back for its final 10-part series. Louis won the war against Holland and now wants control over Europe. But, back home, a mystery man in an iron mask threatens the entire monarchy.



Claude, Disney Jr

This show follows the adventures of beret-wearing dog Claude (voiced by 10-year-old Alexander Molony) and his sock chum Sir Bobblysock (Simon Callow) in the seaside resort of Pawhaven. Local trader Denzel Pedal is voiced by Shane Richie (above).



Love Island, ITV2

It's time for hormones to rage in the sunshine along with high passion and fall outs! Caroline Flack (above) is back to host this fourth series. The brand-new singletons will hope to find love in the villa and follow in the footsteps of last year's winners Kem Cetinay and Amber Davies.



Our Girl, BBC1

Michelle Keegan is back as Corporal Georgie Lane in the latest four-part story. This time 2-Section and Special Forces are in Nigeria when some schoolgirls are kidnapped. Michelle is also tracing her roots on BBC1's *Who Do You Think You Are?* this week.

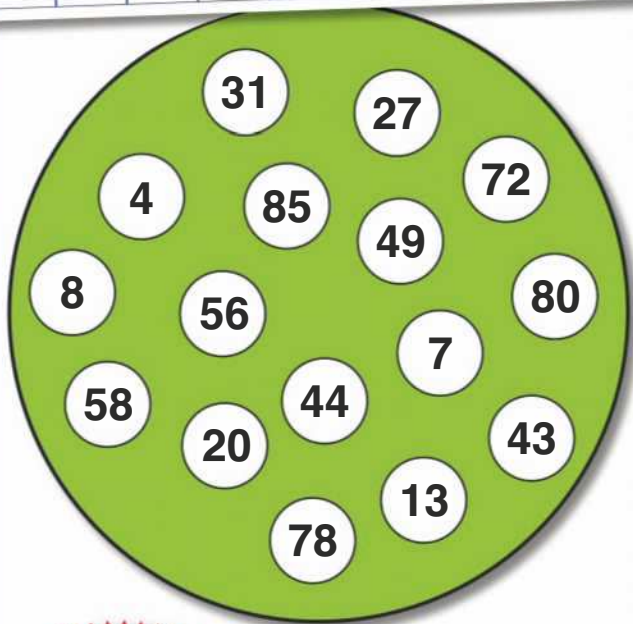
WIN £100!

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](#).

	A	11	A	23		W	44	E	51	M	60		G	85
B	4	I	13	T	27					E	67	N	76	
	M	19		Z	35		H	58		U	80	T	87	



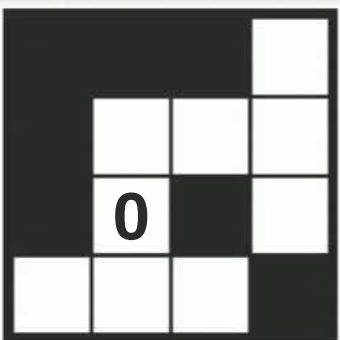
WIN £25!

PUZZLE 7

Number fit!

Which one of the listed numbers won't fit in this mini grid? **Enter on p45.**

- 103
- 164
- 306
- 340
- 643



The girl

ROCK

OUR WO

Her heavy-metal-loving daughter had cheated death once, now Wendy Yates, 44, from Salford, prayed she'd do it again...

I couldn't help smiling as I walked past my daughter Joanna's room. She was sitting cross-legged in front of her mirror with heavy metal blaring, carefully straightening her fringe until it was perfect. It was early 2016, and Joanna, 16, was getting ready to go to another gig with her friends. 'Be careful in those mosh pits,' I warned her. I was a little over-protective of Joanna, and with very good reason. When Joanna was 12, she'd been hit by a car while crossing the road to school. I'd only just dropped her off when I got the call. Racing to the scene, I'd been confronted by an image I've never forgotten. Paramedics working on Joanna as she lay unconscious in her school uniform, covered in cuts and bruises. The accident had left Joanna suffering serious head injuries, as well as a fractured neck, pelvis and eye socket,

plus a broken shoulder. She faced a fight for her life. Even when the doctors at Salford Royal Hospital stabilised her, they told me and my husband Ian, then 41, that her recovery would take months. But Joanna had stunned everyone by bouncing back so quickly she was home within two weeks. A tough little cookie, that was my girl. But, still, after such terrible injuries I didn't want



Joanna:
a talented
viola player

who rocked world



That perfect fringe...



My beautiful, music-mad daughter

her doing herself any damage by headbanging!

'I'll be fine, Mum,' she laughed now, kissing me goodbye.

Her long, dark hair swung as she skipped out of the house. That perfect fringe of hers, her pride and joy, didn't have a strand out of place.

Beautiful inside and out, Joanna's style set her apart from the crowd.

Doc Martens, black shorts and her favourite heavy-metal band T-shirts.

Not my cup of tea, but Joanna's music was her passion.

Not just the noisy stuff, either, she was a gifted singer as well as playing viola in a local orchestra.

On 20 February 2017, Joanna went shopping with her boyfriend Matty, ahead of a family trip to Butlins.

'My head really hurts,' she groaned when I picked her up.

She was prone to migraines since the accident, so we didn't think much of it.

But, in the early hours, Joanna wandered into our bedroom in a daze.

'I keep being sick,' she croaked.

She was in a bad way.

Soon, an ambulance arrived to take her to Salford Royal Hospital.

By the time we

reached the ward, Joanna was very confused, barely aware of her surroundings.

'Where's the bed?' she asked, as she shuffled right past it.

Sitting down, she closed her eyes and began to fidget, moving her arms strangely.

I thought she must've been settling herself down.

Joanna soon fell into a deep sleep, and doctors ran tests.

Waiting by her bed, an anxious feeling gnawed.

The surgical smell, the bustle of the nurses...

It was all too familiar.

It was as if I'd spun back four years, to when Joanna was fighting for her life.

'I can't believe we're here again,' I said to Ian.

'She'll be OK,' he replied.

I nodded. He was right – this was our Joanna. Bouncing back was what she did...

But then a doctor came over, told us he had the test results.

'I'm so sorry, but Joanna isn't going to make it,' he said softly.

'I don't understand...'

stammered, in shock.

Though they were still trying to determine a cause, the doctor explained Joanna's brain was so swollen it'd squashed her brain stem. The body can't live without it.

Ian and I had no words – all we could do was cry in each other's arms.

The next morning, I washed and brushed Joanna's hair, straightening her fringe perfectly for her.

'Just how you like it,' I whispered.

I still held on to a small flicker of hope that history would repeat itself, that she'd beat impossible odds.

But this time we weren't so lucky.

Our beautiful Joanna passed away on 22 February

2017. She'd contracted pneumococcal meningitis.

Though doctors had no idea how Joanna had developed it, this particularly deadly strain caused such severe inflammation in her brain that it killed her in just two days.

'What now?' I asked numbly.

When nurses asked if we'd considered organ donation, Ian and I looked at each other.

A selfless, caring soul, Joanna believed in helping

people – so donating her organs seemed a perfect way to honour her memory.

All of Joanna's friends also became organ donors in her memory, and so did we.

In fact, we're pushing for the law to be changed so people have to opt out of donating.

Just before her funeral, we got a letter saying Joanna's lungs had gone to a woman in her 20s, and her liver to someone in their 60s.

A man who'd been on the waiting list for a year got one kidney and her pancreas, while a lady in her 60s who'd been waiting for seven years got her other kidney.

We were so glad for them that Ian shared it with family at the wake.

Though my heart was breaking, I felt comforted, knowing Joanna would've wanted to help others.

We were also contacted by Meningitis Now, which was such a support. Friends, relatives and local musicians rallied to raise over £14,000 for the charity in Joanna's memory.

We miss her so much, and talk about her every day.

Our amazing, music-mad Joanna rocked our world, and always will.

● Visit meningitisnow.org for more information.

This was our Joanna. Bouncing back was what she did...

Easy eats...

Summer SPUDS

The humble potato is deliciously versatile – plus it's gluten-free, fat-free and a great healthy eat!

Greek potato salad

Serves 4 Prep: 15 Cook: 15 min

68p
per
serving

- 500g salad potatoes (such as Charlotte or Maris Piper), scrubbed
- 2 small red onions, thinly sliced
- 400g can chickpeas, drained and washed
- 175g cherry tomatoes, halved
- 50g black olives, pitted and chopped
- Small handful of fresh, flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped

For the dressing:

- 2tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2tbsp lemon juice
- 1tsp grated lemon zest
- 1tsp Dijon mustard
- Salt and black pepper

1 Simmer potatoes for 15 min until tender, drain, leave to cool slightly, then cut into quarters.

2 Put all dressing ingredients in a small

bowl, and whisk well to combine.

3 Put potatoes in a bowl and, while still warm, pour over half the dressing, then leave to cool.

4 Add onion, chickpeas, tomatoes, olives and parsley, then the remaining dressing. Toss together and serve at room temperature.

Potato tabbouleh

Serves 4 Prep: 10 min Cook: 10 min

WIN £50
PUZZLE 8

Bitesize!

1	2	3	4
5			
6			
7			

Across

1 Seafood
5 Cod-like fish
6 Part of eye
7 Canvas shelter

Down

1 Voucher, receipt
2 Unusual
3 Similar, related
4 Finest

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



96p
per
serving

- 400g salad potatoes, diced
- 50g fresh parsley, roughly chopped
- 30g fresh mint, chopped, few sprigs reserved
- 1 bunch of spring onions, finely sliced
- ½ a cucumber, peeled and diced
- 4 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and diced
- 3tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lemon, juice and zest
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 pitta breads and 1 lemon cut into wedges, to serve

1 Bring a large pan of water to the boil and cook the potato

for about 10 min, until just tender. Drain well and leave to cool.

2 Put the chopped parsley, mint, spring onions, cucumber, tomatoes olive oil and lemon zest and juice in a large mixing bowl and stir well to combine and coat all ingredients with oil.

3 Add the cooked, diced potato and gently mix again, taking care not to break up the potato.

4 Season to taste and scatter over a few reserved, whole mint leaves. Serve with warm pitta breads and lemon wedges.

Spiralised potato salad

Serves 2 Prep: 10 min Cook: 10 min

- 2 large potatoes, such as Desiree, peeled
- 20g pine nuts
- Zest of ½ a lemon
- 1tbsp olive oil
- 10 basil leaves, chopped
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- ½ jar roasted red peppers
- 1 thick slice honey-roast ham, chopped
- 10 black olives, pitted and roughly chopped

1 Bring a saucepan of salted water to the boil. Spiralise the potatoes and cook for 3-4 min, then drain in a colander.

2 Toast pine nuts in a frying pan over a low heat until just golden brown. Transfer to a large mixing bowl.

3 Add the lemon zest, olive oil and basil. Toss spiralised potato in dressing and season.

4 Mix in roasted peppers and arrange on a serving plate. Top with chopped ham and scatter over some olives to serve.

Recipes from *Potatoes: More Than A Bit on the Side*. For more, visit lovepotatoes.co.uk/recipes.

Treat of the Week



91p
per
serving

Money for NOTHING

Her ex was demanding cash, and Chloe Roberts, 24, from Liverpool, didn't know what he'd do if she didn't give in...

Creegan: outside court

Walking my pug Coco through the park, I saw a familiar face coming towards me.

My ex – Anthony Creegan. 'Hi, Chloe,' he said. 'How's life treating you?'

Most women would have turned and walked the other way after bumping into an ex.

But I had no hard feelings towards Anthony.

He'd been my first love when we'd met at school aged 15.

And we'd been together for four years, on and off.

He wasn't a bad lad. Just a bit stingy and lacking in ambition.

We'd gone our separate ways after I'd had enough of him struggling to keep a job, while I'd worked hard, studying Health and Social Care, as well as waitingressing part time.

I hadn't minded paying my way. But Anthony was always skint and I was trying to save for a better future.

Now, a couple of years after we'd split, I hoped he'd pulled himself together.

As we caught up, it was clear not much had changed.

'I've just moved into a place

near you,' he said, grinning.

Then...

As he shifted from one foot to the other, I could tell there was something else on his mind.

'I've run out of cash,' he said. 'Could you give me £20 for food?'

I sighed, opened my purse and handed him the money.

I didn't want to see him go hungry and I'd just been paid.

'Go on, then,' I told him.

Only, after that, I kept bumping into Anthony.

I'd find him loitering at the end of my street, waiting for me to come home from work.

'Lend me 30 quid,' he'd say, telling me it was for food or to pay a bill.

Feeling sorry for him, I'd give in.

Then, a few months on, I heard that Anthony was seeing someone else.

Good, I thought. He might leave me alone now.

His new girlfriend, Paisley Santos, added me on Facebook and sent me a message saying hello.

She seemed nice enough and I was

happy Anthony had moved on.

But unfortunately it was all wishful thinking...

Very quickly, the pair of them took to bombarding me with phone calls and texts.

And they always had the same intention – to ask for cash.

Sometimes it would be a tenner, other times £150.

I'm outside yours, Paisley would message me.

Then seconds later, I'd get another text...

Me and Anthony have no money.

And if I didn't reply...

WE NEED

THAT MONEY! yet another text would read.

Or I'd get a menacing voicemail from them.

It was relentless.

If I didn't respond immediately to texts, they'd grow even more threatening.

Don't ignore me! Paisley texted once. Or I'll come to your house and wig you and your mum.

She meant she'd pull out our hair! It was terrifying.

Yet another time, Paisley rang the doorbell and Mum answered.

She made out she was a friend of mine so, unwittingly, Mum called me downstairs.

When Mum was out of earshot, Paisley demanded cash from me.

Backed into a corner, I handed it over.

I was too embarrassed to tell anyone what was going on.

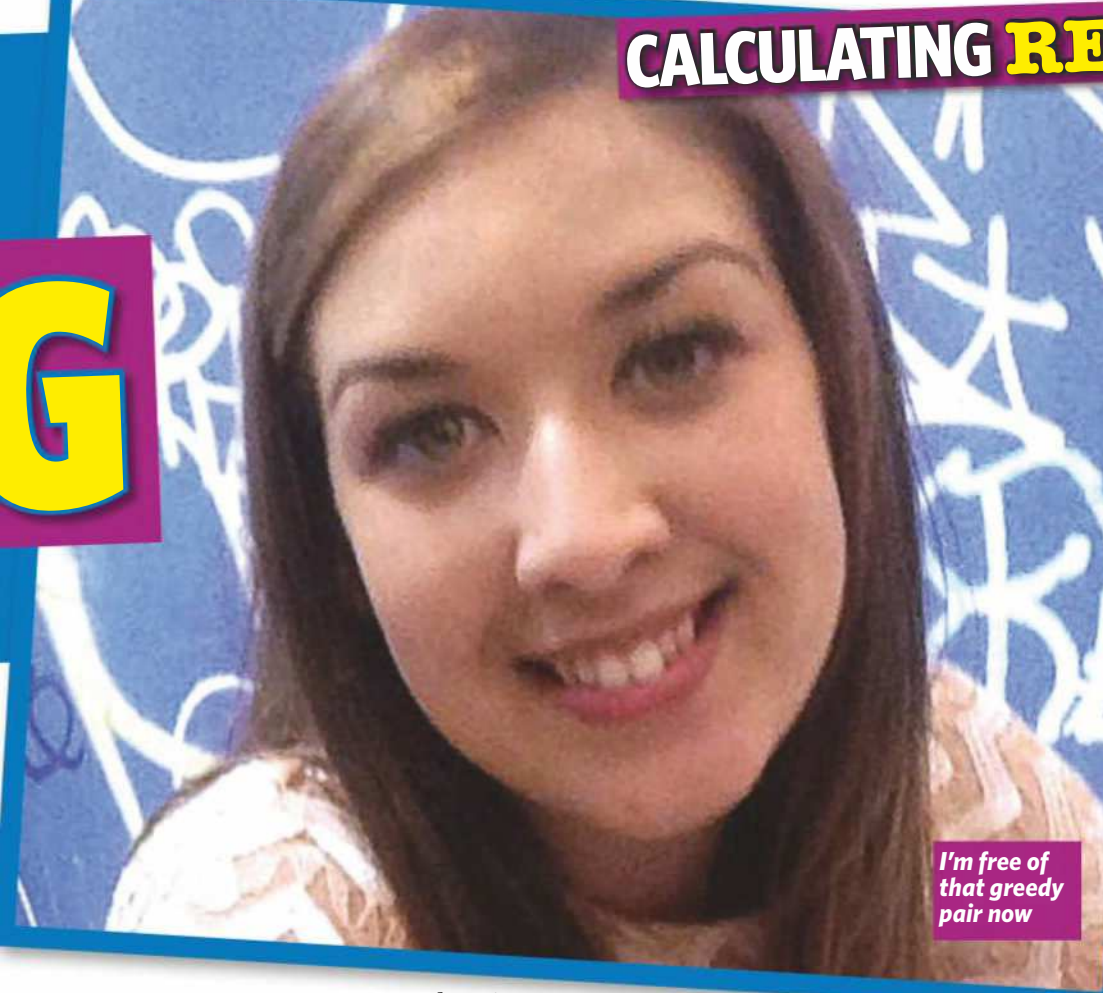
And I was worried that, if I told Mum, Paisley and Anthony would bring trouble to our door.

I changed my mobile number several times but, somehow, they

Anthony was always skint. I was trying to save for a better future

With Anthony back when we were dating

G



I'm free of that greedy pair now

still managed to get hold of it through friends.

'I want you to transfer money straight to my bank account,' Paisley demanded one day.

'But I'm skint!' I cried. 'Take out a loan, then,' she barked at me.

By now, I was in so deep, I felt I had no other choice.

So I took out a few payday loans and handed a few hundred over.

I knew it was mad. But I'd always been timid, shy.

Paisley and Anthony were the opposite. I knew that they'd never leave me alone.

But I was just too scared to say no to their demands.

I had no idea what they were spending the cash on and I didn't dare ask, either.

The constant harassment turned me into a complete nervous wreck.

I lost 2st and the stress of everything caused me to fail all of my exams at uni.

Plus I'd gone from being a good saver to being in thousands of pounds worth of debt.

Over the course of two years, Paisley and Anthony took a

whopping £16,500 from me.

But, even when the loans dried up, they weren't content.

'You can pawn your Pandora bracelet and watch,' insisted Paisley, having seen me wearing them.

They put me through two years of hell - all they got was a slap on the wrists

She and Anthony made me hand them over so they could take them to the pawnbrokers.

My dad, Graham, 46, noticed they were missing.

'They're just in my room,' I lied to him.

When Anthony and Paisley realised I had nothing of value left, they came round when Mum and Dad were out.

'Make us dinner,' Anthony ordered, putting his feet up on the sofa.

I should have told them to get lost, but I was too scared. I felt trapped in a nightmare.

However, last December, I came home from work and Mum cornered me in the kitchen.

'Who is Paisley Santos and why are you transferring money to her?' she asked.

My heart started pounding when I saw

my bank statement in Mum's hand.

She must've found it while she was clearing up.

Unable to hold my distress in any longer, I broke down in frantic sobs, told her everything.

She was devastated - and very angry, too.

Mum had never liked Anthony, but she'd had no idea this was happening.

'We need to go to the police,' she insisted.

I knew that she was right. It was the only way to

get Paisley and Anthony out of my life.

Mum came with me and I made a statement.

I also showed the police the texts and e-mails and let them listen to all of the menacing voicemails.

Soon after, Anthony and Paisley were arrested.

But, that same day, Paisley still had the nerve to text me.

I am literally starving, you have ruined my whole Christmas, it read.

After everything, she still felt no shame.

This January, Anthony Creegan, 23, and Paisley Santos, 20, appeared at Liverpool Crown Court.

The court heard that, despite claiming they were starving, Paisley admitted to police that she'd spent the money on silly things, such as a kitten.

Anthony denied any wrongdoing and claimed he only borrowed money with the intent to pay it back.

Total rubbish.

The pair pleaded guilty to harassment after the Crown Prosecution Service agreed to drop blackmail charges.

Creegan was sentenced to 17 weeks in prison and Santos to 14 weeks, both suspended for 12 months.

Creegan also got a five-month curfew, while Santos was ordered to complete 100 hours of unpaid work.

I was really gutted that they'd got off so lightly.

They'd put me through two years of hell - and all they got was a slap on the wrists.

Still, all that really matters is that my nightmare's now over.

Thankfully, since they were in court, they've left me alone.

I've repaid all of my debts and now have a new job in the care industry.

I feel so stupid for letting Creegan and Santos fleece me. And I'll never fall into that trap again.

They're nothing but a pair of money-grabbing bullies.

I owe them nothing, and I never did.



Paisley Santos: new girlfriend

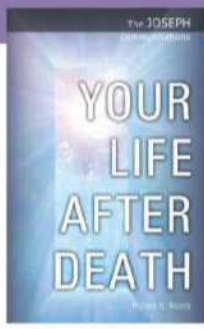
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Puzzle entry

Issue 23, 7 June 2018 Closing date for all entries: **13 June 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! p20

Final answer

Puzzle 4 Cross it! p22

Final answer

Puzzle 5 Sudoku! p22

Final answer

Puzzle 6 Strike it! p38

Final answer

Puzzle 7 Number fit! p38

Final answer

Puzzle 8 Bitesize! p41

Final answer

GOOD LUCK TO ALL OUR READERS!

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PRIZE PUZZLE ANSWERS

Issue 21, 24 May 2018

Cross it!

```

      PLAN  PHOTO
BOO L   U R K
U   S W I S S   N E I
M E T B   L O G A L B
P O R T I C O   E T B
      G E R M U
S   B   A   E M I T
O P A L I N E   W Z
B   Y   U   L   Z
H I G H B A L L   Z E A U
I   L   B   I   C O N
N   A   E   P   I   I
D I S T R E S S   T   V
I   S   Y   E I G H T Y
    
```

Crack it!

```

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

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

Crack it! Miller

A quick word!

Everybody

Follow it!

```

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

Win without finishing!

```

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

Bitesize! Late Sudoku! 6,4,6

Strike it! Wholemeal

Number fit! 2420

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IS YOUR NAME HERE?

Prize Winners, Issue 15, 12 April 2018

£25 An Answer!

G Smith,
Chester.

Crack it!

A Lea,
Lincoln.

A Quick Word!

K Harrison,
Blackburn.

Follow it!

D Wightman,
Huddersfield.

Strike it!

C Potts,
Tyne and Wear.

Cross it!

A Lea,
Lincoln.

A Quick Word!

K Harrison,
Blackburn.

Sudoku!

A Osborne,
Cambridge.

Number Fit!

S Williams,
Middlesex.

Bitesize!

B Jefferson,
County Durham.

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PUZZLE 9

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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.

	1		2		3			4		5		6	
7								8					
9								10					
							11						
12											13		14
15			16						17				
18						19						20	
21	22								23				
24									25				

ACROSS

- 7 Museum official (7)
- 8 Exhibition (7)
- 9 People selling items (7)
- 10 Upset (events) (7)
- 12 ... Lilly, actor in TV show *Lost* (10)
- 13 Criminal, hooligan (4)
- 15 In reality (2,1,6,2,4)
- 18 Rim, brink (4)
- 19 Taking leisurely walk (10)
- 21 Con, cheat (7)
- 23 Person disloyal to their country (7)
- 24 Not common (7)
- 25 Chloe ..., Richard and Judy's daughter (7)

DOWN

- 1 Kept watch over (10)
- 2 Girl, young woman (6)
- 3 Most rude (8)
- 4 Share out equally (6)
- 5 Pre-dinner drink (8)
- 6 Group of tents (4)
- 11 Stood in rows (5,2)
- 14 Not abridged by film board (10)
- 16 Submissive behaviour (8)
- 17 Bursting forth (of violence) (8)
- 19 Ruler in some Muslim countries (6)
- 20 Poured, teemed (6)
- 22 Harry Potter's magic and duelling stick (4)



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

Fighting FOR NANA

Luke Danskin, 27, from Glasgow, was a taekwondo champ. But with another secret talent...



Bowing to my opponent, my heart soared with pride. I'd just won a gold medal at the 2004 Scottish Taekwondo Championships, and I was over the moon.

It had all started when I had my first taekwondo lesson at the age of 12. Straightaway, I was hooked.

I loved everything about the Korean martial art – the training, discipline, competitions – and I worked my way through the different coloured belts.

While all my friends played football at weekends, mine were spent going to taekwondo contests all over the UK.

Then, when I was 14, I was asked to help teach taekwondo, and I found I was a natural.

But then I started hearing voices in my head.

'I must be going mad,' I told myself.

It took me a long time to realise that the voices were spirit people talking to me. All my life, I'd been clairvoyant, able to see spirits... Now I was hearing them, too.

Strangely, the only time the spirit voices stopped was when I was doing my taekwondo!

'Must be because I'm so

focused,' I thought.

I won another gold medal at the Scottish Championships in May 2005. Then, in March, 2007, when I was 17, I was awarded my black belt.

But, seven months later, my uncle, James Burns, passed away suddenly. My family was devastated but, straightaway, he started visiting me from the spirit world.

'I'm fine,' he'd say, smiling at me.

I was desperate to tell my family that James was safe and happy in the spirit world. But no-one knew about my psychic gift and I was scared they'd think I was crazy.

In May 2009, I won my third Scottish Taekwondo Championships gold medal.

But, in July of that year, my nana, Lizzie Burns, 81, had a heart attack.

She was terribly ill in

hospital, but, when I went to visit her, she opened her eyes suddenly and looked at me.

'You see them, don't you, Luke?' she whispered. 'I've seen them all my life, too.'

Nana was clairvoyant, like me. I'd inherited my psychic gift from her.

Sadly, Nana passed away four days later.

She'd spent her whole life keeping her gift a secret, and I knew she wouldn't want me to do the same.

I vowed to use my psychic ability to help others in honour of my beloved Nana.

I started going on courses to develop my mediumship. And I finally plucked up the courage to tell my family about my connection with spirits.

I needn't have worried about their reaction – they supported me wholeheartedly.

Even my taekwondo instructor Sheena Sutherland encouraged me to develop my mediumship and take it further. So, in 2012, I began to do it full-time.

In August the following year, I met my girlfriend, nurse Kirsty Graham, 23.

With her help, my career



I inherited my gift from Lizzie



I'm a black belt

She'd spent her whole life keeping her gift a secret



Uncle James has been in touch

has gone from strength to strength.

I love being able to help so many people through my work. But, of course, I still find time for taekwondo.

I am now a third-degree black belt and I also judge contests myself.

I've found that there are so many similarities between taekwondo and mediumship.

The two disciplines are both about developing your spirituality and finding inner peace.

I'm so blessed to be a martial-arts medium!

● For more about Luke, go to lukedanskin.com

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CODE 14DG



Your Stars

31 May - 6 June 2018

7 days of hope & happiness with Claire Petulengro

ARIES

21 March-20 April

The common way people give up power, is by thinking they don't have any. Use this week to look back and see how far you've come in two years. You're capable of success - you're a phoenix that's risen from the ashes. Be kind to yourself and others will follow suit.

Call: 09058 170 710*

TAURUS

21 April-21 May

It feels as if you're not getting anywhere with a relationship. You're an earth sign, so those who understand you know you can't be rushed. You can't see that, though, as you want dramatic displays of affection. Think about what you really want and soon...

Call: 09058 170 711*

GEMINI

22 May-21 June

Don't play games in love or you'll get your fingers burnt. Why not watch this week's dramatics unfold before making any irreversible decisions. A forced change means you'll no longer see someone who you took for granted. Don't feel blue, but learn from this life lesson.

Call: 09058 170 712*

CANCER

22 June-23 July

The past is on your mind... You may be remembering what you wanted to happen, rather than what actually did. But are you wishing for something which never existed? Focus on what can actually be achieved. Foreign links can improve financial opportunity.

Call: 09058 170 713*

LEO

24 July-23 Aug

Many signs are talking for the sake of it, so believe half of what you see and nothing of what you hear! Do your own research and don't believe what unreliable people tell you. An ex is on your mind for the wrong reasons. So remember the reasons you moved on!

Call: 09058 170 714*

VIRGO

24 Aug-23 Sept

Your element of Earth has helped you to settle into a situation quicker than close ones thought you could. They don't realise just how much last year taught you. Pay more attention to the chronological order when it comes to legal documents, contracts and the like...

Call: 09058 170 715*

LIBRA

24 Sept-23 Oct

The stars line up to clear your mind and you make sense of others' mixed messages. Be nice to new faces in business, for it's those you think hold no power who can open doors. With Pluto's help you find the imagination to solve long-standing problems.

Call: 09058 170 716*

SCORPIO

24 Oct-22 Nov

Many signs have gone through a lot more than you're aware of, so make an effort to listen as well as talk. It's a great week to get to the bottom of what did or didn't happen last weekend. Don't accuse loved ones - but ask simple questions to find the answers you need.

Call: 09058 170 717*

SAGITTARIUS

23 Nov-21 Dec

Avoid telling lies as they'll come back on you if you do. Your element of fire could see you revealing secrets. But keep anything you're told to yourself. As this is important to ensure that somebody close becomes a permanent fixture in your life - which you really want!

Call: 09058 170 718*

CAPRICORN

22 Dec-20 Jan

There's an educated feel to your chart and you'll make more progress this week than you have all year. Don't lie about what you haven't done or you'll seem jealous to new people. Somebody you meet after Sunday can change your life more than you could ever imagine!

Call: 09058 170 719*

AQUARIUS

21 Jan-19 Feb

You've a lot to cope with, but you've come a long way after the disasters which occurred at the end of 2017. You should be proud of all you've achieved so hold your head high and allow yourself to receive the praise which is coming your way with open arms.

Call: 09058 170 720*

PISCES

20 Feb-20 March

It'll be easy to say or do the wrong things. Think before you speak and don't spend too much time explaining the reasons behind your decisions. Choices come before you which make your life a better place to be. Instant attractions will stir you. Trust in what you feel.

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!**

IRAN FOR MY LIFE

NAKED & BLEEDING



THE SECRET I HID AWAY

FOR 30 YEARS



Innocent & carted away by police!

WHO FRAMED ME?



On Sale THURSDAY 7 June

PHOTOS: NORTH NEWS & PICTURES LTD, SWANS, TRIANGLE NEWS

Here VROOOMS the bride!

Victoria Faye, 29, from Hull, had a wheely good idea for her wedding



Ready, get set, married!

Adam was up for it...

YOU'VE GOTTA LAUGH!



As I flicked through yet another bridal magazine, I sighed. Horse and carriage, Rolls-Royce, limo... nothing felt like me.

I wanted to arrive at my wedding in style, but how could I stand out from the crowd?

I've always been rather 'random', as my friends might say. And when I got engaged to Adam, 25, I knew I wanted my wedding to be a bit different.

Adam was my toyboy. We'd met at Hull University on teaching courses when he was 19 and I was 22.

In 2013, he sank to one knee and proposed. I was ecstatic.

But life hadn't been easy for us. In October 2015, I'd had to quit my job as a teaching assistant after being diagnosed with fibromyalgia. It left me suffering extreme exhaustion and muscle pain. Sometimes, I was bedridden for days.

I was worried my condition would ruin my big day.

But it wouldn't stop me being unique.

'We'll ride to the wedding on

micro scooters!' I told my bridesmaids over Facebook.

'You're mad!' they all laughed.

'It's just a bit of fun,' I explained. But inside, I knew that a few years down the line I might not be able to walk. I had to do it while I still could.

And though I was worried about the exhaustion, it was a gamble I was prepared to take.

Thankfully, the bridesmaids were all on board. Adam thought it was hilarious, too!

I was excited, but nervous.

Determined fibromyalgia wouldn't ruin my day, in the weeks before the wedding I spent hours in a swimming pool doing exercises given to me by a physiotherapist.

On 5 August 2017, I woke up with butterflies in my stomach.

Putting on my long white dress and heels, with my hair neatly

pinned back, I hardly looked like I was ready for exercise.

Adrenaline coursed through my veins as I watched my three bridesmaids - dressed in 50s-style green dresses - mount their scooters.

I'd bought six kids' scooters from Toys R Us for £10 each - one each for me and my bridesmaids, one for my mum, and one for Adam to ride from the ceremony to the reception!

I'd decorated them with pink flowers and ribbon, and added the words *Bride and Groom* to mine and Adam's in stick-on crystals.

'Are you all ready to ride?' I called to the girls.

I'd mapped out a route that would lead us right to the Guildhall in Hull.

My godmother walked Adam's scooter to the ceremony, ready for him.

It took 30 minutes to complete the ride. I had to keep stopping, but I

was determined to do it.

Needless to say, my choice of wedding transportation caught everyone's eye.

'Congratulations, you look beautiful!' strangers cheered and clapped as I whizzed by.

'This is so much fun,' I cried to my bridesmaids.

I'd been worried about making it through the day, but I felt amazing.

After the ceremony, Adam hopped on his scooter, too.

'You nutter!' he chuckled.

As we headed to the reception, I could tell he was loving it.

The photos from our big day are hilarious - not many people can say they rode to their wedding on a scooter!

Although my adrenaline kept me going throughout the evening, I had to spend the next three days recovering in bed. But you know what? It was totally worth it.

What a scooter hoot!

I had to keep stopping but I was determined to do it



My bridesmaids hit the road



Transport in the pink!

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