

LION'S HEART

Lynsey McCourt, 35, from Dalry, saw her life flash before her eyes as she woke up to what looked like a massacre – but would her baby make it?

Looking down at the pregnancy test, my stomach dropped. There were two lines, forming a clear plus. I was pregnant. Horror rocked through me and tears formed in my eyes. *This is not what I'd planned.* With my husband Kenneth, 39, already on the road as a coach driver, I was alone in the house with this news.

How are we going to manage? I thought.

We already had such a busy household with our three children – Naomi, 14, Nathan, 10, and Kyle, eight.

My days were filled with working full-time and my nights ironing school uniforms before crashing into bed.

Throwing another child into the mix would only add more unwanted stress.

Calling Kenneth, I fought back tears.

'It'll be fine,' he said. 'We'll find a way to manage.'

With Kenneth's words in my mind, I rang my parents Linda, 56, and Christopher, 59.

'We're over the moon, Lynsey!' they cooed.

And so my fears dissipated. Instead, I looked on the bright side – we had a little baby coming!

At our 16-week scan, we found out we were having a baby boy in perfect health.

Sitting our children down, Kenneth and I couldn't wait to share the news.

'You're going to have a little brother!' we announced.

While Naomi had been hoping for a sister, she still beamed with joy.

Even Kyle was over the moon – he didn't want to be the youngest anymore!

And so, we started preparing

for our new arrival. Seeing the cot we set up in the corner of our bedroom, I couldn't wait for him to arrive. Only, I never knew it would be much sooner than my due date of 23 July 2022.

Settling into bed on a Sunday night in May 2022, exhaustion swept over me.

I'd spent the evening making sure the kids were ready for school in the morning and then I fell asleep instantly.

I didn't even stir when Kenneth left for work at 5am.

But only 11 minutes later, a loud popping sound woke me.

Turning on the lamp, I let out a scream at what I saw.

I stared at the bed in horror. Splattered across the mattress was a huge pool of blood – it looked like a massacre!

Leaping out of bed in a panic, I felt no pain.

Instead, blood gushed down my legs and my heart was pounding.

What is happening? I thought.

All I could think about was my baby boy.

Panicking, I rang Kenneth. 'You need to get home right now,' I said. 'I'm bleeding.'

The phone call lasted no longer than five seconds, with Kenneth rushing home.

'Mum! What's going on?' I heard Nathan and Kyle shout.

My scream had clearly woken them.

'Stay there boys,' I replied, trying to stay calm for them. 'Mummy will be OK.'

I didn't want them to see what had happened – it would only distress them.

'Can you wake up Naomi for me?' I shouted. 'Tell her to

unlock the door boys. Daddy's coming home.'

Then, I frantically called the ambulance.

'It's like a crime scene!' I told them.

'Can you feel the baby?' the call handler asked. 'I need you to check if he's coming now.'

Dismayed, I felt between my legs for my baby, but found nothing.

Easing myself onto the bed on all fours, I tried to ignore the blood as it continued gushing down.

Then it hit me.

Am I going to lose my baby? I thought just as Kenneth burst into the room.

Seeing the blood, he was speechless at first.

Then, he wrapped his arms around me. 'It'll be OK,' he kept saying.

Soon, footsteps were pounding up the stairs.

Two paramedics arrived in my bedroom and looking at the blood,

they barely said a word. They advised me to lie down and Kenneth undressed me, slipping me into clean pyjamas.

As the kids were at home, Kenneth stayed with them.

And I was rushed into the ambulance alone.

Throughout the journey, I begged to feel something.

Can I feel him kicking? I thought, waiting for a flutter.

The thought of losing my baby was too much to bear – I just couldn't imagine not having him now.

'Is my baby going to be OK?' I asked the paramedics. But they said nothing – I



Me and Kenneth bringing our boy home



He was so small



LEO IS OUR LITTLE MIRACLE

It looked like a crime scene with blood gushing

I knew my baby wasn't in my belly anymore

knew they couldn't give me false hope.

Arriving at Ayrshire Maternity Unit 25 minutes later, I was rushed into theatre as I'd suffered a haemorrhage.

As doctors hurried around me, I could barely hear them.

'Is my baby OK?' I asked. But they didn't answer me.

Is my baby even alive? I thought, feeling more faint.

I spent the next hour in and out of consciousness.

'She's lost two litres of blood,' I heard the doctors say gravely.

Then the midwife delivered

the most unexpected news. 'Lynsey, you're going to have your baby now,' she said.

Why is this happening now? I began to panic.

But all I could do was nod in agreement as the mask covered my face, putting me to sleep.

The next thing I knew, I was slowly opening my eyes to a quiet hospital room.

At first, I struggled to remember what had happened – but then it clicked.

Placing my hands on my stomach, I knew my baby was not there.

But I wasn't sore, just completely exhausted.

I could make out two blurry figures – my husband and a nurse – stood by my bed.

'Would you like to come down and see your son?' she asked Kenneth.

'Go and see him!' I yelled, making them jump. 'Please see him and tell me he's OK.'

After checking I was alright, Kenneth went downstairs to meet our baby boy.

I couldn't believe I'd delivered him two hours ago. But the nurse told me that he

was OK – he even let out a wee cry when he was born.

And so, born nine weeks premature at 7am and weighing just 3lb 10oz was our little Leo.

After receiving a one litre blood transfusion, I was taken down to meet him.

Hooked up to oxygen tubes to assist his breathing, he looked so tiny.

With just a nappy covering him up, I desperately wanted to cradle him.

Instead, I settled for peering through the incubator glass at him.

And two days later, I could finally hold him.

At first, I was scared in case I hurt him – he was so small and delicate.

But he was perfect. He truly completed our family.

While Leo had to stay in the hospital for five weeks, I spent two weeks there recovering.

After school, my children visited me and I tried to put their minds at ease.

'Mummy and Leo are doing OK,' I reassured them. 'We need to stay in hospital for a little while, but we'll both be

home soon.'

And that only made them more excited.

Meanwhile, our little Leo kept on fighting.

The nurses even nicknamed him the Lion Cub – after all, he was called Leo and had the fierce spirit of a fighter.

Finally taking Leo home from the hospital five weeks later was the best day of my life.

Back home, my parents and the kids waited at the door. As I lifted Leo out of his car seat, the children gawped.

Showing them all their baby brother, they took turns kissing his forehead.

While our first few weeks were challenging, with Leo struggling with his acid reflux, we were just so lucky to have him.

I learned at a later doctor's appointment that I'd suffered a blood clot in my womb which kickstarted Leo's premature birth.

And although it was unexplained, I was prescribed six months' of iron tablets for further prevention.

Smiling as Naomi whisks Leo away every evening for a cuddle upstairs, I still catch a

few minutes to myself, even with a new baby.

'Mum, please can we have another one?' Kyle begged.

While Leo is definitely our last, he's certainly not our least.

His biggest milestone was his first birthday on 23 May this year.

With a lion themed cake, our close family gathered for a tea party at home to celebrate.

Leo filled the gap in our family we never knew we had – he was the best surprise ever.

And I'm just so thankful that his strong lion heart got him through it all.



Uncle Graeme and Kyle came to visit



Our lion-hearted boy