## My true-life stor

Sarah's so smitten with 🕷 her pet pig Petunia – the awesome oinker even sleeps between her and her hubby



s I lay in bed in the early hours. I was woken by the sound of a soft snore. Thinking it was my son Elijah, six, climbing in with me, I rolled over to give him a hug.

'Aw, come here,' I mumbled as I pulled him closer.

But as I snuggled into him, I soon realised that it wasn't Elijah. This little body was much hairier.

Plus, it seemed to have four little trotters and a snout... 'Petunia?' I asked, blearv-

eyed. 'Is that you?' Our pet pig let out a tiny snuffle as if to say, 'Yes, I'm here, and I'll stay as long as I like, thank you

34 that's life!

with Petunia tucked in between me and my husband. David. Talk about piggy in the middle!

very much!

I thought when I woke. Eight months earlier, my two youngest, Elijah and Mikayla, three, had come to me with a burning question.

'Mum, can we get a pet pig?' Elijah asked. 'Why do you want one of

those?' I asked. 'Because they're so cute!' Mikayla chipped in.

'Me and your dad will think about it,' I said.

I had to admit, I liked the idea of having a piggy pal around the place too.

They were terribly sweet creatures.

But with five kids, three cats and two dogs, I wondered if we had time to dedicate to a trotter

housemate

Śmiling, I dozed back off, pig breeders. way to a farm.

Meeting us out front, the farmer took us to the pen, where his piggies were running around oinkina. Two of the terrific trotters caught our

eye, and we ended up taking them! They were American mini pigs,

and would grow up to one metre and weigh up to 200lb.

It was hard to believe, because

they were currently half that size. Back home, we called the kids downstairs.

'We have a surprise for you,' I said, as they came running down.

Soon. David and I were on our

When they spotted the pigs in the living room, their eyes lit up. 'Piggies!' Mikayla cooed.

'What do you want to name

them?' I asked.

'This one can be Peaches, and Still, I could help researching this one can be Mr Pickles,' Elijah how to care for pigs, and what grinned. The kids absolutely adored they needed to thrive.

Next, I began looking for local their new pets. We crate-trained them and

vant one o

those?

they slept in their crates at night. They could go to the toilet either outside or use puppy pads

indoors, like a dog would, And whenever we had to leave

Me and

Petunia

home for a couple of days or more, they'd board

with other piggies. Peaches and Mr Pickles settled in so well, and it was a joy watching the kids bond with their pig pals.

They were so gentle, making sure the super swines had everything they could possibly need.

Caring for the piggy pair brought out their compassionate side too.

We doted on the oinkers so much, I couldn't help longing for a third.

And one day, I found the

perfect piggy online! 'She's The One!' David grinned, taking in

her gorgeous teeny features.

I contacted the breeder, and five days later, we drove to see her for the first time.

She had the sweetest face, and beautiful black and white markings.

I kneeled down next to her, and she sniffed my hands inquisitively.

'Hello there!' I said, as I stroked her bristly hair. She squealed and rubbed up

against me, and I knew that she was going to be part of our family. It was her way of saying, 'Take

me home please, you're my mummy now!'

There's no arguing with that, I thought.

'We'll take her!' I said, handing over £275.

We decided to call her Petunia as it also started with P – and her grandmother was called

Petunia Before we knew it, Petunia

## Peaches loves dressing up too

was ruling the roost and hogging the limeliaht!

She adored Peaches. Mr Pickles, the cats and dogs, and the kids were simply smitten with her.

Elijah, who was autistic and suffered with sensory needs,

particularly took a shine to her. He sometimes got overstimulated, but Petunia

to calm and comfort him during his difficult episodes.

If ever he was on the verge of a tantrum, I'd say, 'Where's Petunia?

Then he'd seek her out and give her a cuddle, instantly easing the tension.

I often found them snuggled up together, which was remarkable as Elijah usually struggled to relax or sit still.

with him, and they had such a

She was so gentle and patient

'Good girl!' I said, fussing over her. Next, we tried to get her to spin. After a few attempts she had grasped it.

acted as his therapy pig, helping

David was busy working nights as a doctor. I told my pals that sleeping next to a pig was no different to sleeping with a cat or

dog – and she probably snored less than their husbands Other nights Petunia slept in her crate, or in her verv own bedroom.

We just wanted her to be happy, so she chose to do what she wanted, when she wanted to!

Her boudoir contained her own little pink bed, and a wardrobe full of bespoke outfits.

It had been my idea to try dressing her up, and when we'd given it a go, Petunia had adored it.

I would never have put her in clothes if she wasn't a happy hog, but Petunia was in her element.

Plus, she's looked hot to trot! Now I've spent nearly £200 on her custom-made outfits, but she's worth every penny.

Petunia is so glam that we even pop rollers into her bristle! Having three pigs who mainly live in the house might seem

strange to some, but we wouldn't have it any other way.

Getting that terrific trio was one the best decisions I've ever made.

One day I hope to get Petunia certified as a therapy animal, so that I can take her into schools and old people's homes.

She brings so much joy to our lives that I want to share that with other people.

Looking after pet pigs can be a lot of work, and they aren't cheap, but our family haven't looked back.

Our super swines are just sensational!

Sarah Minix, 39



special bond. And their connection only grew and grew... 'Elijah, let's try to teach her some tricks,' I

suggested one day. Peaches and Mr Pickles hadn't been receptive, but

I reasoned a smaller pig might be

different. The first

command we taught her was to sit, using Cheerios as a reward

To my surprise, she picked it up easily.

'She's so clever!' Elijah cheered. Teaching Petunia was just like training our dogs.

We soon realised that she was very intelligent, and eager to learn. Within a few weeks, she knew how to fetch, roll a ball, and even play piano!

She quickly became house-trained and went to the toilet inside - although she could also go outside if she wished.

Weeks went by. and our precious pig loved living indoors so much that she started sleeping in my and David's bed most nights!

And she became the perfect cuddling companion when



some tricks

She loves

her rollers

ALC: NO.