

APPENDIX

Text 1

A Little Miracle: Sometimes life has a way of proving the experts wrong by Dr. Fay Catherine Gloria

1. It was March 3, 2001, and as a fourth-year medical student I had just started my obstetrics rotation in a rundown, sparsely equipped government hospital in Manila.
(Formal style)
2. My co-clerks and I referred to the hospital as a ‘baby factory’. During a 24-hour period, it was not unusual for the staff to attend to the birth of 180 babies. **(Formal style)**
3. This particular day, which was also my 25th birthday, marked my first ever shift working in a delivery room. I felt ill-prepared for the coming onslaught of women giving birth. I felt inexperienced, and half the time I was praying that I wouldn’t drop the slippery infant as he came out to the world. **(Formal style)**
4. I soon got the hang of things. During deliveries, I would encourage the mothers by saying, “Push, Mummy, so we can see if your baby is a girl or a boy!” In this hospital, women often saw a doctor for the first time on the day they were about to give birth. Finding out the sex of the infant was usually enough motivation for them to push with all their might. **(Formal style)**
5. Around 10 p.m. -15 hours into my shift- a patient was brought to my delivery table. She was in her late 20s, fair-skinned and with long straight hair. It was her second pregnancy, and she was weeping softly. The woman had come in the emergency room

because she had not felt her baby kicking for several days. She had a brown foul-smelling discharge that reeked of death, and doctors could not detect a heartbeat using a Doppler ultrasound. The baby, she was told, was dead. **(Formal style)**

6. It was my job to deliver the stillborn infant. I wondered why this poor woman wasn't given a Caesarean to ease her suffering, but I assumed that, since this was a busy hospital, no operating theatres were available. Besides, the obstetric resident told me that it would be an "easy delivery" because the baby was dead and the mother had given birth before. She said I should have the baby out in less than 30 minutes **(Formal style)**.
7. For the first time that night, I was silent. How could I convince this woman to push, just so she could deliver her dead child into the world? After almost an hour, the resident returned and asked me why it was taking so long. I whispered that I could feel the infant's head, but the mother just was not pushing enough. I asked if I could speed up the delivery by doing an episiotomy, a small incision to enlarge the birth canal. She nodded her approval. I quickly made the incision and felt the baby pop into my hands. He was a lovely little boy, weighing about three kilos. As was normal practice, I placed the infant on a sterile sheet I had draped over the mother's abdomen. She looked at her dead son, then turned her head away. I was quiet the whole time. There are simply no words to say to a woman who has just given to a dead infant. **(Formal style)**
8. As I started to suture the incision I had made, I heard a small cough. I looked up at the baby, who was still on the mother's belly. Then I heard the loveliest and loudest sound in my life. He was screaming his lungs out! All I could say was, "Mummy,

your baby is alive!” over and over again. Her soft cries turned into convulsive happy tears. “Doctor, thank you for bringing my child to life,” she said repeatedly. **(Formal style)**

9. It was the most memorable birthday I ever had. Nothing compares to that magical moment when I experienced the wonderful miracle of birth and learned first hand that doctors are not gods. By all accounts, the infant should have been dead. It was then I realized that if I were to make a mistake as a doctor, this was the kind I would not mind making- to be proven wrong by a patient who turns out to be alive when I thought he was dead. I never found out what happened to that woman and her baby after they were discharged. But I will never forget them. They made me believe that miracles do happen. **(Formal style)**

Text 2

Humour Heals by Mehmet C.OZ, M.D.

1. As a heart surgeon at New York-Presbyterian Hospital / Columbia University Medical Centre in New York, I have to deliver a lot of bad news. Humor is a wonderful tool. **(Formal style)**
2. It helps patients cope with what they’re facing and it helps them get better too. There’s a lot of data showing that patients who are depressed after heart surgery have a higher mortality rate, and optimistic patients have significantly fewer wound infections. Laughter can cultivate that optimism, and it truly is the best medicine in many ways. **(Formal style)**
3. It defuses fear. People are scared of their bodies. Humor can crack through the ice and take the fear away. For example, I have to tell patients that they might be at risk of

cognitive impairment after surgery. They're terrified, fearing the worst, so I tell them in a humorous way that it's usually just like forgetting Year Two. People understand what that means, and it doesn't seem quite so scary. **(Formal style)**

4. It's reassuring. After open-heart surgery a patient might say to me, "Doctor, my chest really hurts." And I will respond with a wink, "Oh, does it feel like someone opened you up, cut the bone, and operated in there?" That tells them that the pain is normal and they're going to be fine. **(Formal style).**

5. It relaxes you. Medical procedures such as surgery are stressful. Why you push any engine, including your body, to its maximum, every once in a while it slips a gear. The ways the body manifests that are irregular heartbeats, high blood pressure and increased sensitivity to pain. When people use humor, the autonomic nervous system just tones down a bit to take it off high gear and that allows the heart to relax. **(Formal style)**

6. It helps doctors cope. If you're giving people bad news everyday, it becomes tough. For many doctors, our coping mechanism is to take the humanity out of it. Humor is a mutually beneficial coping mechanism. Plus, it's a better way to enjoy life. **(Formal style)**

Text 3

Don't Pig Out at Parties

1. If you're on a diet, then Christmas, with all its parties and family get-togethers, can be a minefield of temptation. These tips from online slimming service Cafeslim may help. **(Formal style)**

2. If you're going to a party straight from work, have a healthy snack (a bowl of cereal, slice of wholemeal toast or yoghurt) before you set off, so you don't arrive hungry. **(Formal style)**
3. Studies show the greater the choice of food, the more you eat. Rather than trying a bit of everything, limit yourself to three or four dishes. **(Formal style)**
4. Don't pick: put some food on your plate, then move away from the buffet. **(Formal style)**
5. Drink a large glass of sparkling water first: it'll fill your stomach. Start with crudités, salads and seafood; 42 cherry tomatoes have the same kilojoules as 50 grams of tortilla chips. **(Formal style)**

Text 4

Who R U?: a wrong number led me straight to Mr. Right by Jacinta Farrow

1. I had recently moved from Rockhampton, in northern Australia, to Sydney and was having trouble settling in when a friend invited me to a corporate ball. **(Formal style)**
2. Getting ready for the occasion, I sent a quick SMS message to his mobile phone asking him to bring his camera. I was all dolled up and wanted to record what promised to be a great evening. **(Formal style)**
3. Continuing to get ready for the ball, I heard the familiar "beep beep" of an incoming SMS message: "Who R U and why do U want my camera?" **(Informal Style)**
4. I was shocked. I must have punched in the wrong number. I quickly replied to the mystery person, apologizing. **(Formal style)**
5. I didn't think much of it until later that evening when another message came through: "Who R U anyway?" At first I was reluctant to reply, but reassured myself no harm

could come from an SMS message. “A 21-yr-old female QLDer in NSW. Who R U?”

The reply came back: “A 21-yr-old carpenter from Brisbane. Nick.” By now I was far

more interested in the guy who was messaging me than the ball I was attending.

Pushing my luck, I replied: “Single?” Again he sent back: “Yeah. You?” My heart

racing, I replied: “Yes.” (**Consultative Style**)

6. As the night went on we exchanged several more messages. We discussed what I was doing that evening and what he was doing the next day (looking at houses). And we left it at that. (**Formal style**)

7. A week later I got another message: “Have been thinking about U all week. Tell me about yourself.” Acknowledging the alarm bells going off in my head, I replied cautiously-giving as little away as possible “Wanted to MSG U too. Have 2 bros & 2 sisters. 2nd eldest.” He replied straight back: “Me too. 2 bros, 2 sis. I am 2nd eldest.” OK, my guard went right up at this point. “R U kidding?” I asked. “No, serious,” he replied. I still found the coincidence hard to believe but asked: “Where R U going to buy house?” His reply: “Buy house wherever you want to live.” (**Consultative Style**)

8. Now, this made me uneasy. He sounded like a great guy and we had uncanny things in common, but what did I really know about him? (**Formal style**)

9. Then he sent another message: “Where do U work?” I replied: “Work 4 a bank. 1st job since Uni. Ok, but miss QLD sun.” He replied: “Plenty of sun here.” (**Informal Style**)

10. And so it started- a beautiful, funny SMS friendship. I discovered Nick was originally from New Zealand. He worked for a construction company and was also a triathlete- ironically, I had completed my first triathlon the month before. He was funny, athletic, intelligent and had the same sense of humour as me. Often we would

message each other at exactly the same moment and even think the same things at the same time. But we had other things in common too: I've always dreamed of living in a big, old timber house. Nick, as a carpenter, has always wanted to build one.

(Formal style)

11. After six months of messaging, I finally built up the courage to speak to Nick and phoned him on his birthday. Soon we were racking up enormous phone bills. Six months later, we decided to meet. I was flying back to Rockhampton, with a 45-minute layover in Brisbane, so we arranged to have breakfast at the airport. Despite a bad case of butterflies in my stomach, I was looking forward to finally meeting Nick. I stepped off the plane and my heart jumped. He wasn't exactly what I'd expected (not the tanned Adonis I had often pictured), but he was tall and muscular. His hair was long and he had gorgeous freckles. He held a gold rose in his hand. **(Formal style)**

12. Our romance progressed quickly after that, and over the next few months Nick made the ten-hour drive to Sydney three times. Then one day he phoned me, excited and unsure. He had found a house in Brisbane he liked and wanted to know if he should buy it. Although it wasn't the house of his dreams, it was a good price and we decided he could do it up. Nick moved into the house and two weeks later his work required him to move to New Zealand for six months. It was a great opportunity. Nick asked me to go with him- I had never been overseas and yearned to travel- but I had a great job in Sydney and friends I didn't want to leave. **(Formal style)**

13. A month went by with Nick in New Zealand and our phone bills expanding to a dangerous size, when my roommates decided to move out. My landlord took the

opportunity to increase the rent, and I knew I couldn't afford to live there any longer. Fate seemed to be pushing me towards Nick, so I took the hint. I rang Nick, booked a flight, organized movers to take my furniture to his Brisbane home and was gone within a week. The five months I spent with Nick in New Zealand were amazing. He was amazing! A few months later we settled back in Australia, in Nick's house, and I started a new job. Life was great. Then one weekend we decided to drive to Rockhampton to visit my family. On the way, we stopped near an historic village to stretch our legs. My gaze drifted towards the highway. When I turned back Nick was standing before me with a glinting diamond ring in his hand. I couldn't help but smile, tears coming to my eyes. I looked from him to the ring and back again. "Will you marry me?" he asked. I was so busy smiling and crying that it took me a few seconds to reply, "Yes!" **(Formal style)**

14. We are now busily planning a wedding. It will be a beautiful occasion that we'll share with our large families and dearest friends. But one thing will be different: we won't be asking our guests to turn off their mobile phones. After all, you never know who might be on the other end of the line. **(Formal style)**

Text 5

"I'm Sorry, Could You Repeat That?": When her hearing failed, Jane Thynne never thought that having babies might be the cause.

1. I went deaf in one ear quite suddenly 12 years ago. I spent hours lying on my side with ear drops trying to dislodge the blockage that was somehow in my right ear. I did this in a blur of fatigue as I had just had my first child. Just my luck to get a dodgy ear

sat such an awkward time, I complained to my doctor-who instantly made the connection. **(Formal style)**

2. My problem wasn't earwax but otosclerosis. I hadn't heard of this, but learned it is one of the most common forms of deafness in young women and often develops during pregnancy. Ordinarily the tiny bones in the middle ear-the malleus, incus and stapes-conduct sound from the eardrum to the inner ear. With otosclerosis a spongy over-growth of new bone fixes the stapes in place, stopping the vibrations. About ten percent of all adults are thought to be affected to some degree; 60 per cent of cases are genetic and run in families, but pregnancy hormones can accelerate the process. In past decades, women already suffering were advised no to have children. **(Formal style)**

3. I am lucky. In 80 per cent of cases, it affects both ears. With each new baby I lived in dread, but so far only one ear doesn't work, being filled with a soft, rushing tinnitus that gets worse when I am stressed or tired. My consultant offered me a stapedectomy, in which the stapes is replaced by a prosthesis. It's a 45-minute procedure done under local anesthetic. But a second consultant asked if I was planning more children: "Childbirth, and sometimes flying, can cause a stapedectomy to fail." I declined surgery, thinking I could cope with one ear. Surely other people didn't even notice. Then an acquaintance remarked, "Oh, you're dear? I just thought you were stand-offish, always ignoring what I say." Given the link with pregnancy, there is one ironic consolation. Lie on the right side and you need never be woken up at night again. **(Formal style)**

Text 6

It's Kiss and Tell

1. Looking to pucker up with the one you love this Valentine's Day? **(Informal style)**
2. Engaging your sense of smell might be a good idea. New research claims finding a perfect partner could have more to do with their subtle odor than their personality, looks, or wealth. **(Formal style)**
3. Research at Cardiff University, Wales, suggests smell has direct access to the primitive regions of the brain concerned with mood and memory and can activate certain memories. "When you kiss somebody, you bring your nose into contact with those parts of the skin secreting compounds," says research leader Tim Jacob. So, when you lock lips with someone special, savor the smell as well as the moment. **(Formal style)**

MY STORY

PERSONAL STORIES BEYOND THE CALL OF DAILY LIFE

A Little Miracle

Sometimes life has a way of proving the experts wrong | BY DR FAY CATHERINE GLORIA

IT WAS March 3, 2001, and as a fourth-year medical student I had just started my obstetrics rotation in a rundown, sparsely equipped government hospital in Manila. My co-clerks and I referred to the hospital as a "baby factory." During a 24-hour period, it was not unusual for the staff to attend to the birth of 180 babies.

This particular day, which was also my 25th birthday, marked my first ever shift working in a delivery room. I felt ill-prepared for the coming onslaught of women giving birth. I felt inexperienced, and half the time I was praying that I wouldn't drop the slippery infant as he came out to the world.

I soon got the hang of things. During deliveries, I would encourage the mothers by saying

were about to give birth. Finding out the sex of the infant was usually enough motivation for them to push with all their might.

Around 10 p.m. — 15 hours into my shift — a patient was brought to my delivery table. She was in her late 20s, fair-skinned and with long straight hair. It was her second pregnancy, and she was weeping softly.

The woman had come to the emergency room because she had not felt

For the first time that night, I was silent. How could I convince this woman to push, just so she could deliver her dead child into the world?

After almost an hour, the resident returned and asked me why it was taking so long. I whispered that I could feel the infant's head, but the mother just wasn't pushing enough. I asked if I could speed up the delivery by doing an episiotomy, a small incision to enlarge the birth canal. She nodded her approval.

Then I heard the loveliest and loudest sound of my life. The baby was screaming!

her baby kicking for several days. She had a brown foul-smelling discharge that reeked of death, and doctors could not detect a heartbeat using a Doppler ultrasound. The baby, she was told, was dead.

It was my job to deliver the still-born infant. I wondered why this poor woman wasn't given a Caesarean to ease her suffering, but I assumed that, since this was a busy hospital, no operating theatres were available. Besides, the obstetric resident told me that it would be an "easy delivery" because the baby was dead and the mother had given birth before. She said I should have the baby out in less than 30 minutes.

Dr Fay Catherine Gloria finished her studies at the University of Sto. Tomas after she completed her obstetrics rotation. She now works as a senior emergency medicine resident at St Luke's Medical Centre in Manila.

I quickly made the incision and felt the baby pop into my hands. He was a lovely little boy, weighing about three kilos. As was normal practice, I placed the infant on a sterile sheet I had draped over the mother's abdomen. She looked at her dead son, then turned her head away. I was quiet the whole time. There are simply no words to say to a woman who has just given birth to a dead infant.

As I started to suture the incision I had made, I heard a small cough. I looked up at the baby, who was still on the mother's belly. Then I heard the loveliest and loudest sound in my life. He was screaming his lungs out! All I could say was, "Mummy, your baby is alive!" over and over again. Her soft cries turned into convulsive happy tears. "Doctor, thank you for bringing my child to life," she said repeatedly.

It was the most memorable birthday I ever had. Nothing compares to that magical moment when I experi-

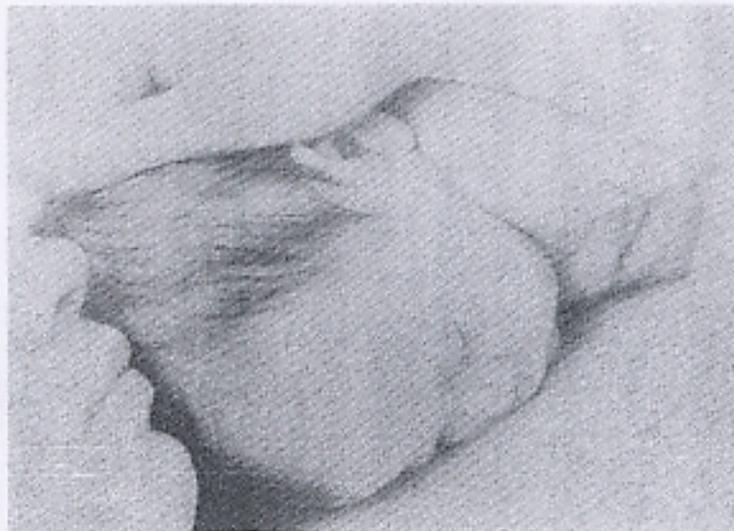


PHOTO © MICHELLE SAUMER/GETTY IMAGES

enced the wonderful miracle of birth and learned first-hand that doctors are not gods. By all accounts, the infant should have been dead. It was then I realised that if I were to make a mistake as a doctor, this was the kind I would not mind making – to be proven wrong by a patient who turns out to be alive when I thought he was dead.

I never found out what happened to that woman and her baby after they were discharged. But I will never

forget them. They made me believe that miracles do happen.

My Story is a regular feature about moving, challenging or amusing personal experiences above and beyond the call of daily life. If you'd like to contribute a story, send your submission to the address on page 1 or by e-mail to asia.raf@readersdigest.com. Alternatively, log on to readersdigest.com. Alternatively, log on to readersdigest.com and click on the My Story link. We will pay \$500 if we publish your story.

LICENCE TO PRACTISE



*Why do so many doctors have vanity plates on their cars?
Maybe to remind them of their specialties.*

Seen in the parking lot outside a dentist's surgery:
2 3 PAIR

ELIZABETH HASBRDUCK

Found on the car of a urologist: PPMDI

G. ROBERT LEACH

One plastic surgeon's licence: XS NOS.

PAUL RUTH

AT WIT'S END

Not only are proverbs words to live by, but they're often words to mock.

Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.

DOROTHY PARKER

A journey of a thousand miles begins with a delay of about three hours.

MILTON BERLE

If God wanted us to fly, he would have given us tickets.

MEL BROOKS

Show me a man with both feet on the ground, and I'll show you a man who can't put his pants on.

JOE E. LEWIS

Putt Do Unto Others . . . Then Run by GFFD DE LEY AND DAVID POTTER

Humour HEALS

BY BEHMET C. OZ, M.D.

A SA HEART SURGEON at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Centre in New York, I have to deliver a lot of bad news. Humour is a wonderful tool. It helps patients cope with what they're facing, and it helps them get better too. There's a lot of data showing that patients who are depressed after heart surgery have a higher mortality rate, and optimistic patients have significantly fewer wound infections. Laughter can cultivate that optimism, and it truly is the best medicine in many ways.

It defuses fear People are scared of their bodies. Humour can crack through the ice and take the fear away. For example, I have to tell patients that they might be at risk of cognitive impairment after surgery. They're terrified, fearing the worst, so I tell them in a humorous way that it's usually just like forgetting Year Two. People understand what that means, and it doesn't seem quite so scary.



PHOTO: © MELANIE BUREL/GETTY IMAGES

It's reassuring After open-heart surgery a patient might say to me, "Doctor, my chest really hurts." And I will respond with a wink, "Oh, does it feel like someone opened you up, cut the bone and operated in there?" That tells them that the pain is normal and they're going to be fine.

It relaxes you Medical procedures such as surgery are stressful. When you push any engine, including your body, to its maximum, every once in a while it slips a gear. The ways the body manifests that are irregular heartbeats, high blood pressure and increased sensitivity to pain.

When people use humour, the autonomic nervous system just tones down a bit to take it off high gear, and that allows the heart to relax.

It helps doctors cope If you're giving people bad news every day, it becomes tough. For many doctors, our coping mechanism is to take the humanity out of it. Humour is a mutually beneficial coping mechanism. Plus, it's a better way to enjoy life.

RDLIVING

YOU = HEALTH = FOOD = TECHNOLOGY = MONEY

Don't Pig Out at Parties

IF YOU'RE on a diet, then Christmas, with all its parties and family get-togethers, can be a minefield of temptation. These tips from online slimming service Cafeslim may help:

- If you're going to a party straight from work, have a healthy snack (a bowl of cereal, slice of wholemeal toast or yogurt) before you set off, so you don't arrive hungry.
- Studies show the greater the choice of food, the more you eat. Rather than trying a bit of everything, limit yourself to three or four dishes.
- Don't pick: put some food on your plate, then move away from the buffet.
- Drink a large glass of sparkling water first: it'll fill your stomach.
- Start with cruditées, salads and seafood; 42 cherry tomatoes have the same kilojoules as 50 grams of tortilla chips.

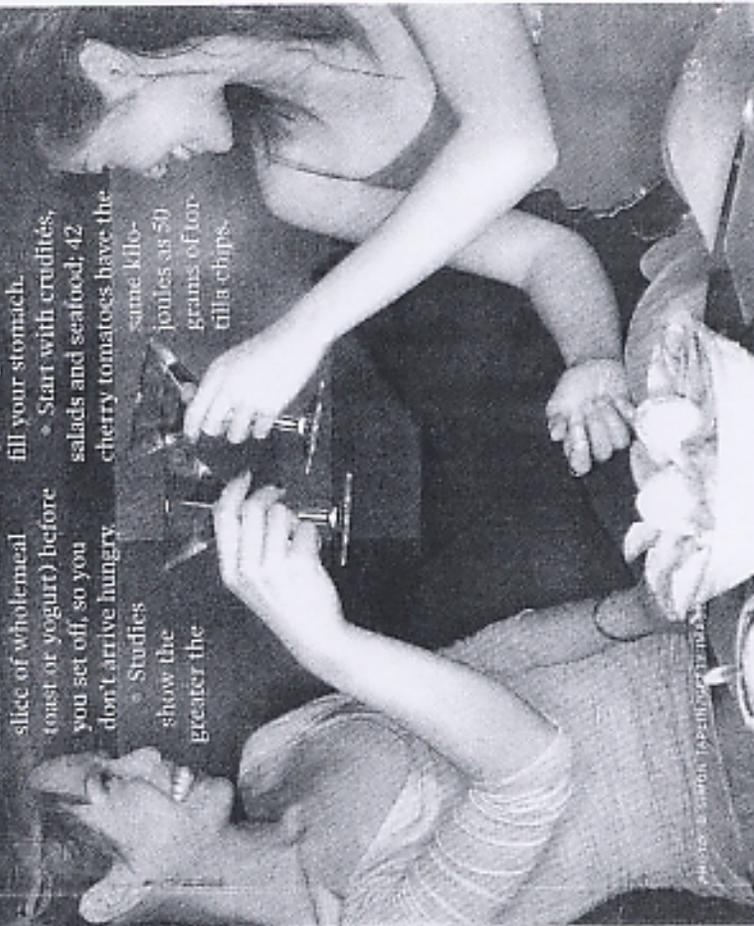
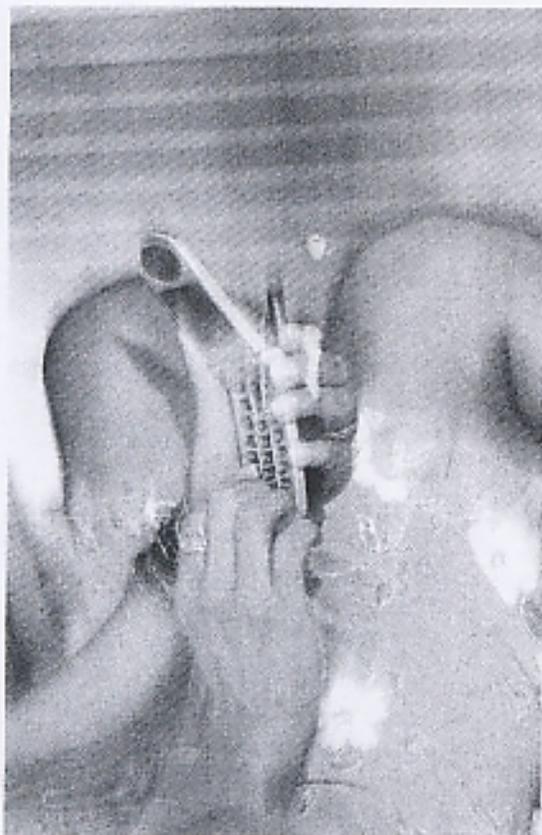


PHOTO: © SHUTTERSTOCK/STEFAN MAYER



Who R U?

A wrong number led me straight to Mr Right

BY JACINTA FARROW

I HAD RECENTLY moved from Rockhampton, in northern Australia, to Sydney and was having trouble settling in when a friend invited me to a corporate ball. Getting ready for the occasion, I sent a quick SMS message to his mobile phone asking him to bring his camera. I was all dolled up and wanted to record what promised to be a great evening.

Continuing to get ready for the

ball, I heard the familiar "beep beep" of an incoming SMS message: "Who R U and why do U want my camera?" I was shocked. I must have punched in the wrong number. Goodness knows who I'd sent the message to. I quickly replied to the mystery person, apologising.

I didn't think much of it until later that evening when another message came through: "Who R U anyway?" At first I was reluctant to reply, but

reassured myself no harm could come from an SMS message. "A 21-year-old female QJ-Der in NSW. Who R U?" The reply came back: "A 21-year-old carpenter from Brisbane, Nick."

By now I was far more interested in the guy who was messaging me than the ball I was attending. Pushing my luck, I replied: "Single?" Again he sent back: "Yeah. You?" My heart racing, I replied: "Yes."

As the night went on we exchanged

Pushing my luck, I replied: "Single?" Again he sent back: "Yeah. You?"

several more messages. We discussed what I was doing that evening and what he was doing the next day (looking at houses). And we left it at that.

A week later I got another message: "Have been thinking about U all week. Tell me about yourself." Acknowledging the alarm bells going off in my head, I replied cautiously - giving as little away as possible. "Wanted to MSG U too. Have 2 bros & 2 sisters. 2nd eldest." He replied straight back: "Me too. 2 bros, 2 sis. I am 2nd eldest."

OK, my guard went right up at this point. "R U kidding?" I asked. "No, serious," he replied. I still found the coincidence hard to

believe but asked: "Where R U going to buy house?" His reply: "Buy house wherever U want to live."

Now, this made me uneasy. He sounded like a great guy and we had uncanny things in common, but what did I really know about him? Then he sent another message: "Where do U work?" I replied: "Work 4 a bank. 1st job since Uni. OK, but miss QLD sun." He replied: "Plenty of sun here."

And so it started - a beautiful, funny SMS friendship. I discovered Nick was originally from New Zealand. He worked for a construction company and was also a triathlete - ironically, I had completed my first triathlon the month before. He was funny, athletic, intelligent and had the same sense of humour as me. Often we would message each other at exactly the same moment and even think the same things at the same time.

But we had other things in common too: I've always dreamed of living in a big, old timber house. Nick, as a carpenter, has always wanted to build one.

After six months of messaging, I finally built up the courage to speak to Nick and phoned him on his birthday. Soon we were racking up enormous phone bills.

Six months later we decided to meet. I was flying back to Rockhampton, with a 45-minute layover in Brisbane, so we arranged to have breakfast at the airport. Despite a

JACINTA FARROW, 24, is a bank teller and lives in Wynnum, Queensland, with her fiancé, Nick, and their two Bortweiller pups.

bad case of butterflies in my stomach, I was looking forward to finally meeting Nick.

I stepped off the plane and my heart jumped. He wasn't exactly what I'd expected (not the tanned Adonis I had often pictured), but he was tall and muscular. His hair was long and he had gorgeous freckles. He held a gold rose in his hand.

Our romance progressed quickly after that, and over the next few months Nick made the ten-hour drive to Sydney three times. Then one day he phoned me, excited and unsure. He had found a house in Brisbane he liked and wanted to know if he should buy it. Although it wasn't the house of his dreams, it was a good price and we decided he could do it up.

Nick moved into the house and two weeks later his work required him to move to New Zealand for six months. It was a great opportunity. Nick asked me to go with him - I had never been overseas and yearned to travel - but I had a great job in Sydney and friends I didn't want to leave.

A month went by with Nick in New Zealand and our phone bills expanding to a dangerous size, when my roommates decided to move out. My landlord took the opportunity to increase the rent, and I knew I couldn't afford to live there any longer. Fate seemed to be pushing me towards Nick, so I took the hint.

I rang Nick, booked a flight, organised movers to take my furniture

to his Brisbane home and was gone within a week. The five months I spent with Nick in New Zealand were amazing. He was amazing!

A few months later we settled back in Australia, in Nick's house, and I started a new job. Life was great. Then one weekend we decided to drive to Rockhampton to visit my family. On the way, we stopped near an historic village to stretch our legs. My gaze drifted towards the highway. When I turned back Nick was standing before me with a glinting diamond ring in his hand. I couldn't help but smile, tears coming to my eyes. I looked from him to the ring and back again. "Will you marry me?" he asked. I was so busy smiling and crying that it took me a few seconds to reply, "Yes!"

We are now busily planning a wedding. It will be a beautiful occasion that we'll share with our large families and dearest friends. But one thing will be different: we won't be asking our guests to turn off their mobile phones. After all, you never know who might be on the other end of the line.

My Story is a regular feature about moving, challenging or amusing personal experiences above and beyond the call of daily life. If you'd like to contribute a story, send your submission to the address on page 1 or by e-mail to asia.rd@readersdigest.com. Alternatively, log on to australia.com and click on the My Story link. We will pay \$500 if we publish your story.

"I'm Sorry, Could You Repeat That?" When her hearing failed, Jane Thynne never thought that having babies might be the cause

I WENT DEAF in one ear quite suddenly 12 years ago. I spent hours lying on my side with ear drops, trying to dislodge the blockage that was somehow in my right ear.

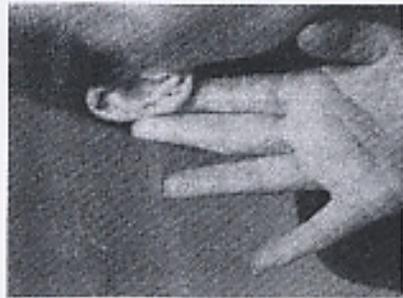
I did this in a blur of fatigue as I had just had my first child. Just my luck to get a dodgy ear at such an awkward time, I complained to my doctor - who instantly made the connection. My problem wasn't ear-wax but otosclerosis. I hadn't heard of this, but learned it is one of the most common forms of deafness in young women and often develops during pregnancy.

Ordinarily the tiny bones in the middle ear - the malleus, incus and stapes - conduct sound from the eardrum to the inner ear. With otosclerosis a spongy over-growth of new bone fixes the stapes in place, stopping the vibrations. About ten per cent of all adults are thought to be affected to some degree; 60 per cent of cases are genetic and run in families, but pregnancy hormones can accelerate the process. In past decades women

already suffering were advised not to have children.

I am lucky: in 80 per cent of cases it affects both ears. With each new baby I lived in dread, but so far only one ear doesn't work, being filled with a soft, rushing tinnitus that gets worse when I am stressed or tired.

My consultant offered me a stapedectomy, in which the stapes is replaced by a prosthesis. It's a 45-minute procedure done under local anaesthetic. But a second consultant asked if I was planning more children: "Childbirth, and sometimes flying, can cause a stapedec-



tomy to fail."

I declined surgery, thinking I could cope with one ear. Surely other people didn't even notice? Then an acquaintance remarked, "Oh, you're deaf? I just thought you were stand-offish, always ignoring what I say."

Given the link with pregnancy, there is one ironic consolation: lie on the right side and you need never be woken up at night again.

The Independent
PHOTO © CHIP SIMONS/GETTY IMAGES

ROLLING

YOU • HEALTH • FOOD • MONEY • TECHNOLOGY

It's Kiss and Tell

Looking to pucker up with the one you love this Valentine's Day? Engaging your sense of smell might be a good idea.

New research claims finding a perfect partner could have more to do with their subtle odour than their personality, looks or wealth. Research at Cardiff University, Wales, suggests smell has direct access to the primitive regions of the brain concerned with mood and memory and can activate certain smells as well as the moment.

So when you lock lips with someone special, savour the smell as well as the moment.



PHOTO © JAMES HENNING/GETTY IMAGES