

The Come Din

It was a surprise request from deep inside Suzanne Gregory's womb. But was a gastric band too late? Here Suzanne, 36, explains

It was my favourite kind of evening and I'd spent all day looking forward to it. I wasn't going to the bingo hall, seeing friends or setting off on a romantic date. What I had planned was quite different and much more intimate.

I went home, walked into the kitchen and rested my hand on the door of the fridge. I said: 'Hello, my old friend. It's time for you and me to spend some quality time together.'

I was a mother of three children and I was trapped in a downward spiral.

After I'd suffered postnatal depression, my husband had left me for another woman. Now I was on my own.

Once the kids had gone to bed, all I had for company was my shiny white refrigerator — and more specifically, the food inside it.

I'd consume chocolate bars and bread, cheese and creamy yogurts. Eating provided the comfort I needed.

However, there was a downside. I weighed nearly 17 stone.

As a young woman I'd been a trim and shapely eight stone. Now I was in

my early 30s and my body was a wreck. It felt as though all hope was lost.

Then, on a rare night out with friends, a man approached me. He was tall, dark and handsome.

He said: 'Excuse me, could I buy you a drink?'

As I glanced around our table wondering who he was talking to, I heard his voice again.

He said: 'I hope I'm not intruding. I really would like to buy you a drink.'

Suddenly it dawned on me. I looked up and stammered: 'Er, you're speaking to me, aren't you?'

He nodded and smiled.

He wasn't wearing glasses. I thought perhaps

he should have been, because he seemed intent on chatting to me.

He told me his name was Richard Wilson.

I said: 'I'm Suzanne.'

He took that as a green light to get us some drinks, and sat down beside me.

We chatted and after a while he said: 'You're gorgeous. You shouldn't be so shy.'

He asked if he could see me again. In my astonishment, I agreed.

We started dating and he was always complimenting me.

He kept saying: 'You really are lovely.'

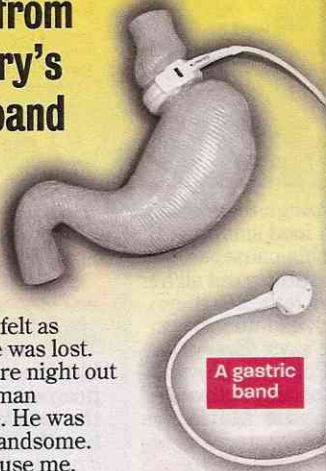
I wanted to believe him but every time I looked in the mirror I felt another piece of my spirit die.

I wished I was slim. It wasn't that I hadn't tried — I'd been on one diet after another. None worked because the problem wasn't hunger pangs.

It was in my head. I ate to alleviate my emotional problems and it was difficult to break the habit.

After a year of being together, Richard said: 'Could we try for a child?'

He loved my children Sam, Ollie and Mica, and got on with them very



A gastric band



Richard and me on holiday



Mica, Sam and Ollie



With Richard, before I had surgery

well. I said: 'If it's what you want, then it's what I want.'

We started trying, but each month went by without success. I became more and more disheartened and to cheer myself up, I'd reach for the biscuit tin.

Before long I weighed 19 stone.

All of a sudden my periods stopped.

I said to Richard: 'You don't think...?'

He beamed from ear to ear and said: 'Oh, I hope so.'

My doctor had other ideas. She fixed me with a stern look and said: 'Your periods haven't stopped because you're pregnant, Suzanne. They have stopped because you weigh too much.'

I felt my face burn with embarrassment.

She went on: 'I'll send you for tests to be sure, but I'm pretty convinced that's the problem.'

I saw a fertility specialist. She looked at me as though

I was some kind of alien and said: 'You'll have to lose three stone before you can boost your chances of having a child.'

The medical staff were all saying the same thing — I was too fat to be fertile.

I left the hospital not knowing what to do. I didn't believe I could shed the pounds, but I wanted

to give Richard the child he was so desperate for.

I began to feel overwhelmed, and in the end I reached a decision.

I told him: 'I think we should forget about a baby for now.'

'But, Suzanne...' he whimpered, looking disappointed.

I said: 'Maybe we'll try again one day, but I can't handle it at the moment. I need to get my weight under control first, then we'll consider it.'

He sighed and replied: 'I feel sad about it, but it's

I was too fat to be fertile

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removed. She went on: 'Because you're a mum-to-be, you'll need to eat properly and get all the right nutrients from your food.'

After I'd had the baby, the band could be tightened again so that I could continue to lose weight.

In the meantime, I was pleased to see my waistline expand.

I would tell friends that I was expecting and they'd look at me and say: 'But didn't you just have a gastric band fitted?'

I'd reply: 'Yes, I did. I've got a baby and a band in my tummy!'

Months later I gave birth to our beautiful daughter Brooke. She was two weeks early and weighed 7lb 11oz.

Richard held her in his arms and said: 'Suzanne, this is the greatest thing anyone has done for me.'

Although having a new baby was tiring, it would have been even more exhausting if I hadn't lost the weight.

Now Brooke is nearly six months old.

I weigh 14 stone and I'm getting lighter every day. But the weight loss is just a bonus — I have my lovely children, I have Richard and I have a new life.

I am truly blessed.

Brooke

your body. You have to do what's right for you, I suppose.'

I told him: 'Good. I'm glad you feel that way, because I've got a plan.'

'Oh?' he said.

I announced: 'I'm going to have a gastric band.'

He looked surprised.

'I don't want you to have an operation,' he said.

'What if something goes wrong? Why do you need to have this done?'

I said: 'I don't think I can do it on my own. My eating, my weight, everything — it's psychological. I need something to help me put a stop to it.'

The gastric band

operation would cost £8000 and I had to take out a loan to pay for it.

Weeks later I left my home in Gore Lane, Bradwell, Derbyshire, and travelled to the Clarendon Hospital in Sheffield for the procedure.

The surgery was the easy part. It was the aftercare that was the most important.

At first I could only eat a spoonful of puréed food or have a mouthful of water.

Within weeks I was a stone lighter. Two months after having the band fitted, I'd lost three stone.

My body was obviously taking its time to adjust.

My periods didn't return and I began to feel dizzy and nauseous.

I was worried. We were soon due to set off for our annual holiday to Lanzarote in the Canary Islands, and I didn't want to ruin it for Richard and

the children.

However, the night before our departure, I felt worse than ever. I could barely stand and I had some other, more unusual symptoms too.

I told Richard: 'I know this sounds strange, but my boobs are really aching.'

As I said the words, I emitted a gasp: 'Good grief. I think I know what's wrong. I need to do a pregnancy test.'

He shook his head and replied: 'Don't waste your money. There's no way you can be pregnant.'

I said: 'I bet I can.'

I dashed out and bought a test. Later, as the result appeared, my face broke into a huge smile.

'It's really happening,' I squeaked. 'I'm pregnant!'

Richard's smile mirrored mine.

To be sure, I took four tests. And the following morning, before we set off on holiday, my GP managed to squeeze us in for another one.

That was positive too.

We had a

wonderful time away, although all I could think about was the baby.

I worked out the dates and told Richard: 'We must have conceived just after my operation.'

After two weeks we returned to Britain and I contacted the hospital where I'd had the band fitted. The nurse said: 'If you're pregnant, we need to make some changes.'

'Oh dear,' I said. 'You won't have to take it out, will you?'

She replied: 'That won't be necessary.'

She explained that the saline solution, which was pumped into the band to tighten its grip, would be



The hospital



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