



When surrogacy turns sour

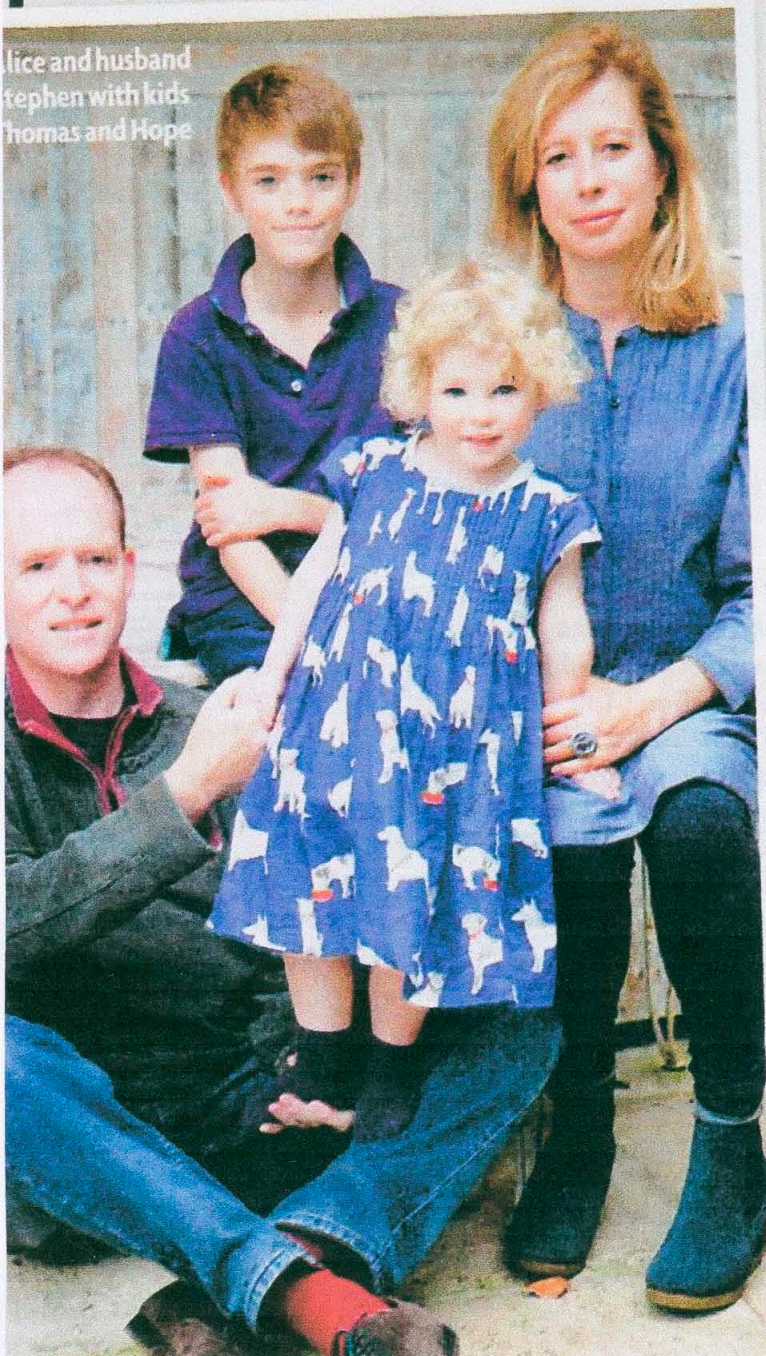
It doesn't always have a happy ending...

◆ **Stuck with twins that weren't hers:** Single mum Helen Beasley was 26 when she agreed to act as a surrogate for American couple Charles Wheeler and Martha Berman for £14,000. Yet after hearing Helen was expecting twins, the couple walked out on the contract. Helen was six months pregnant at the time. The twin girls, born in 2001, were eventually adopted by another couple.

◆ **Agony over Down's syndrome baby:** Pattaramon Chanbua – a 21-year-old woman from a poor fishing village in Thailand – was offered £9,000 to act as surrogate for an Australian couple. But after she gave birth to twins in December 2013 and one had Down's syndrome, she claims the couple took the healthy girl, leaving her to look after the disabled boy herself. As a result, Thailand banned commercial surrogacy.

'I paid a stranger £13,000 to carry my baby'

Alice and husband Stephen with kids Thomas and Hope



I'd always wanted to be a mum and when I married Stephen, a lawyer, in 2001, we began trying straight away. Our son, Thomas, was born a year later and, while he brought us so much happiness, we always hoped he'd have a little brother or sister one day.

By the time I fell pregnant again three years later, I was 38. But at 24 weeks, my placenta detached. Our girl, Sophie, was stillborn and I nearly died from haemorrhaging. Leaving the hospital without our daughter after such a difficult labour was the most heartbreaking thing I've ever had to do.

The next four years saw a series of unexplained miscarriages – four, all in the first trimester – and failed rounds of IVF. We looked into adoption but with Stephen approaching 50, we thought we wouldn't be accepted.

My rational mind told me that perhaps we just weren't meant to have another baby. But a part of me still couldn't let go and Stephen felt the same. 'We'll do whatever it takes,' he said.

Surrogacy was our last resort. As contracts aren't enforceable by law in the UK, we contacted a US agency. They put us in touch with

Amanda, a woman in her late twenties from Minneapolis. She agreed to carry our baby – made with Stephen's sperm and donor eggs – for £13,000.

We used every last penny of our savings, but I hoped it would be some small compensation to the woman who was carrying our child.

Small price to pay

In early 2011, our prayers were answered – Amanda was pregnant. Nine months later, Stephen, Thomas, then nine, and I flew to Minneapolis for the birth.

On 9 October 2011, our girl, Hope, was born, weighing 7lb, after an induced labour. Holding her for the first time, I felt she was truly mine.

Three weeks later, we flew home. 'I love Hope but she's yours,' Amanda whispered as

we said our goodbyes.

Hope is now three and, although it took thousands of pounds and years of heartache, I can't imagine life without her. It's a small price to pay for the happiness she's brought and I'll be grateful to Amanda forever. ◆

◆ **Alice Jolly, 48, is a writer from Stroud, Gloucestershire. Her book *Dead Babies And Seaside Towns* (£14.99, Unbound) is out now. For more surrogacy info, visit brilliantbeginnings.co.uk***

'Holding her, she was truly mine'