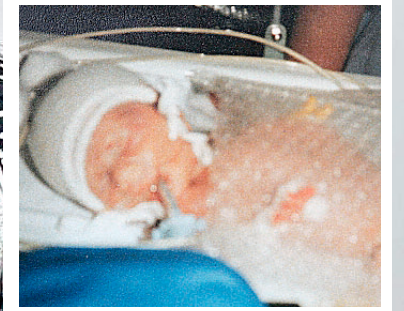


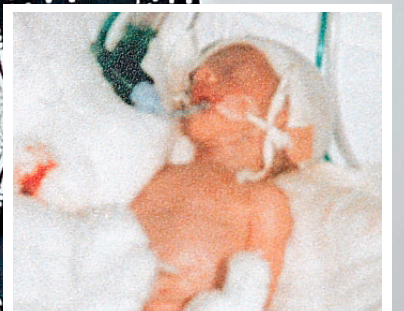
It seemed like a miracle when she had quins. Then began a harrowing month in which, one by one, four of her babies died. So why does Daniella feel so lucky?



Gregory



Joshua



Nicholas



Benjamin



Proud mum: Daniella, and surviving quin Jodi, right

now just a waiting game. Martin and I realised that we had not yet registered any of the children's births, so we left to do that and get a bit of air. The lady at the register office struggled to grasp that we'd had five children all at once and needed to register their births - but that the deaths of three of them had already been registered.

The traffic on the way back to the hospital was dreadful. And I was frustrated. Something told me I needed to get back there as soon as possible.

When we arrived, Benjamin had taken a turn for the worse and had been given drugs to paralyse him, as he'd been unable to burn off the carbon dioxide in his blood. He was better off being paralysed so his body could use all its energy to fight.

I looked at my son's face and he no longer had the little frown of concentration. His face was expressionless, it was as if he had already started his journey.

Our boy was slipping away and I told the nurse I wanted to hold him for his

last minutes, so that just once in his short life he would know the comfort of his mother's arms.

I don't think he felt my tears on his face as I willed him to breathe - but he'd had enough. Our fourth baby died at 9.30pm and at that moment I couldn't imagine feeling happy again.

Martin said that when Benjamin died, he knew, deep down, that he would never have another son. I left Benjamin his teddy, which went with him when they came to take him to his brothers.

The weeks after that saw us throwing ourselves into caring for Jodi. One moment she would require less help and seem pink and settled; the next she could be on maximum help, having a blood transfusion.

But the days and weeks passed and on Christmas Eve we came in to find that Jodi was no longer on the ventilator and was breathing alone.

That night we drank champagne at our home in Hertfordshire, in eastern England, in between calling the

hospital every hour to make sure that she'd had no setbacks. We had turned a corner and from there on, she would go from strength to strength. Today, she has a few learning difficulties and will never be able to cope with 'mainstream' life, but she is a happy, attractive young woman who lives life to the full. She lives in a special community in London where she receives support and lives an independent life.

She works with Martin, 47, doing office administration. She's had several boyfriends and is quite the social animal. After the quins, I fell pregnant naturally and had two

more girls, and they are beautiful, talented and loving. Despite everything, I feel incredibly lucky to have Jodi. But I will never forget my sons. Sometimes I find myself wondering what they would be like now, what they would have looked like, whether they would have passed their driving test, had girlfriends, be going off to university. I light candles for them on the anniversaries of the days they died. I still describe myself as a mother of seven rather than a mother of three, and I always will. I was so fortunate to know those little babies - even for such a short time.

At least they are at peace now.

■ *FOUR More Tears* by Daniella Lerner is available on amazon.com

Pictures: MARK RICHARDS