

OUR TSUNAMI BABY KEEPS MY BOYFRIEND'S MEMORY ALIVE



KELLY MACRO, 29, FROM OLD CATTON, NORWICH, TELLS US HOW...

- SHE WAS DEVASTATED WHEN HER BOYFRIEND, JEZ, WAS KILLED IN THE ASIAN TSUNAMI
- SHE DISCOVERED SHE WAS EXPECTING HIS BABY, GIVING HER A REASON TO CARRY ON
- THEIR SON, THEO, WHO WAS BORN LAST MONTH, WILL ALWAYS REMIND HER OF JEZ

Kelly Macro's heart thumped as she awaited the results of her pregnancy test. In a matter of seconds, she would know if she was expecting a baby. "Do you want me to show you?" asked her friend, Sandie, who was clutching the test behind her back.

Kelly gasped as Sandie, 35, waved the white stick in front of her. A thin blue line confirmed the news she had been nervously anticipating for days. She was pregnant. Never before had Kelly felt such joy combined with such pain.

Weeks earlier, her boyfriend, Jez Stephens, 29, had gone to Thailand on holiday with friends. There, he'd been caught up in the tsunami, becoming one of the estimated 220,000 people who lost their lives on Boxing Day 2004.

"My first instinct was to run and tell Jez about the baby," says Kelly. "I called my mum, then Jez's mum, Linda. We were all in floods of tears.

"After all the heartache and pain of losing Jez, there was a

little ray of hope. Just days before, I'd been wondering how I'd have the strength to go on. Now I knew I had to find the courage from somewhere, so I'd be able to tell our baby about his dad."

Kelly met Jez, a salesman, in 2002, when he joined the company in Norwich where she worked.

"He was confident and outgoing, with a great sense of humour," says Kelly. To begin with, the pair were just good friends.

But a year after they met, in June 2003, Jez asked Kelly out on a date.

"I'd always been fond of Jez, so I accepted," says Kelly. "He had such a friendly manner and could put anyone at ease – we laughed all night."

After a few weeks, Jez introduced Kelly to Franchesca, now two and a half, his daughter from a previous relationship.

"Jez doted on Frankie and wanted her to be comfortable with me from the start," explains Kelly.

"We felt we were meant to be together. We spoke about setting up home together and eventually having kids, but there was no rush."

The couple had been together for a year when Jez brought up the idea of spending Christmas in Thailand.

"He loved to travel," explains Kelly. "At 19, he travelled round the world, visiting Australia, America and Asia."

"His friend, Craig, was moving to Thailand and invited us out there. But I couldn't get enough time off work, so it was decided Jez and another couple of

friends, Gareth and Richard, would go out in early December, and I'd join them later."

On 6 December 2004, Jez and his friends flew to Thailand. But when Kelly looked into booking her flight, she realised it was too expensive, so she decided to stay at home in England.

"I was disappointed, but it gave Jez a chance to have a holiday with the boys," says Kelly. "I missed him, but we were in contact every day, via email, mobile and texts."

"He was having a great time. He travelled all over the country and saw some wonderful things. I was pleased he was having so much fun."

Kelly spent Christmas Day with her family, but spoke to Jez on the phone.

"He was in great spirits," says Kelly. "He'd spent the day fishing off the island of Phi Phi and was planning to go to a few bars."

"I was sad I couldn't be there, but we spoke about having our own little celebration when he got back on New Year's Eve."

The next day, Kelly awoke to the news that a huge wave had brought devastation across Asia, including Thailand.

"I felt a bit sick but told myself

'Knowing I had a part of Jez growing inside me gave me comfort'

not to panic," says Kelly. "The news said that mobile phones wouldn't be working, but I kept trying to call Jez."

"When I hadn't heard from him by the end of the day, I really started to worry."

On 28 December, Craig called his mum and, over a very bad phone line, managed to tell her



Theo Jez was born on 20 August



Kelly and Jez, at a friend's wedding. They had planned to spend their lives together

that, when the tsunami hit, Jez was separated from his friends. The phone cut out before he could tell her any more.

"It was just awful," says Kelly. "A million scenarios went through my mind, but I couldn't bring myself to give up hope."

Over the next few days, Craig, Gareth and Richard searched for their friend. A week later, they found his body in a temple in the Thai resort of Krabi.

"When I heard the news, I went into shock," says Kelly. "My senses were numb."

"I still felt as though Jez had

just gone away on holiday and would be back soon, and everything would be all right."

It was while wrapped up in her grief that Kelly began feeling ill. "At first, I wondered if it was because of the shock," she says.

"But then I started suffering from sore breasts. I had the symptoms for a couple of weeks before

I thought about the possibility of being pregnant."

In January, Kelly's doctor confirmed what the home test had told her – she was 10 weeks pregnant with Jez's child.

"I felt happy at being given the most precious gift but sad at the same time," says Kelly. "And I knew from then on I'd have to take extra-special care of myself and not take any risks."

The following month, Jez's body was flown back to the UK. He was buried in his hometown of Lympne, Kent.

"It was hard to say goodbye, but knowing I had a part of him growing inside me gave me comfort," says Kelly.

As the months passed, Kelly relied on her family and friends for support.

"It was tough having my

scans and feeling the baby kick for the first time without Jez there, but Sandie helped me, as did my mum and dad."

"In April, I decided to move back in with my parents."

On 20 August, Kelly gave birth to a 7lb 4oz boy at Norfolk and Norwich Hospital.

"It was the most amazing experience," she says. "He was so beautiful. I held him and told him he was a very special boy."

Kelly decided to name her son Theodore Jez, after his dad.

"Everyone says Theo looks like Jez," says Kelly. "And, like Jez, he's brought me great happiness and given us new hope. I know Jez is proud of me and his son."

"When Theo grows up, I'll tell him how wonderful his dad was, and how he gave us all the strength to carry on." ■

Words: Helen Etheridge Photos: Alamy/EDP For details of the Jez Stephens Memorial Fund, which raises money for victims of the tsunami, please contact features.reveal@bbc.com