

# Bundle of joy

## We adored our Christmas baby

Laura Beck, 39

**S**itting by my hospital bed, my fiancé Aaron, then 36, squeezed my hand.

'What's the latest?' he asked the doctor.

'It's an emergency caesarean, I'm afraid,' he said.

It was 23 December 2020, and I'd been induced two days earlier, but nothing was happening.

Earlier in my pregnancy, doctors had discovered that my placenta was blocking the baby's way out.

'I just want to meet him,' I said to Aaron.

'Me too,' he smiled.

I'd met Aaron three years earlier, and he was unlike anyone I'd dated.

Instead of going to bars, he'd take me stargazing.

We spent evenings doing jigsaws with a glass of wine, listening to The Beatles.

He'd be an amazing dad.

We were desperate to get our little one home for Christmas.

'It'll be OK - I'll see you shortly,' Aaron reassured, as I was wheeled into theatre.

As the surgeon made his first incision along my tummy, I let out an ear-splitting scream.

The local anaesthetic wasn't working.

'We'll have to put you under,' the surgeon said.

The world became a blur and as I came round, they wheeled me back

to our room.

'Do you want to meet your little boy?' the nurse smiled, and there was Aaron, cradling our bundle.

As we cuddled him close, our baby boy was perfect.

On Christmas Day, baby Anderson and I were still in hospital.

I dressed him in a Santa outfit for his newborn photos.

'He's beautiful,' Aaron's mum Brenda said when she came to visit.

The next morning, I was discharged.

Just in time, as we'd arranged for a marriage officiant to come round on 29 December.

Standing on our back porch, we exchanged vows, with Aaron's parents videotaping it and holding Anderson.

It really was the best family Christmas.

Watching Anderson grow was a gift.

Aaron was totally obsessed

**As we cuddled him close, our boy was perfect**



Me and Aaron before I gave birth

Aaron was thrilled to be a daddy

WORDS: VERONIQUE HAWKSWORTH. PHOTOS: WORLDWIDEFEATURES.COM



Just married, and so happy

with our boy. 'Bath time is the best time,' we sang, bathing him as he splashed happily.

On his first birthday, in December 2021, we hung balloons and invited family and friends.

'Happy birthday, Anderson!' our guests sang, as he sat in his high chair, dipping his fingers in the cake icing.

Days later, we had his first Christmas at home.

As we helped him to unwrap his presents, he giggled, grabbing his new toy hockey sticks.

Winter turned to spring and Anderson loved playing outdoors, especially being pulled around the driveway in his little red cart.

He started nursery, and Aaron and I took turns to drop him off and pick him up around our work hours.

In June 2022, we were plunged into a heatwave,

with temperatures in the high 20s.

'I'll take Anderson this morning,' said Aaron, giving me a kiss.

Anderson had been off poorly the day before, but had woken this morning seeming brighter.

'Love you,' I called to them from the porch.

Moments later, Aaron dashed back in.

'Forgot my phone,' he said, grabbing it before returning to his car.

As I opened my laptop to start my work shift at home, I hoped Anderson was feeling better.

A couple of hours later, I texted the nursery receptionist from my desk.

*How's Anderson doing?* I asked.

She called me, and as she spoke, I went cold.

'Anderson isn't here today,' she said.

Turn over for more ▶

# One awful mistake



Aaron was a wonderful dad



Now I treasure my memories

was confused. Of course Anderson was at nursery. Aaron had put him in the car. 'There must be a mistake,' I told the receptionist, listening to her walk to the classroom.

'I'm really sorry,' she said. 'He's not here.' Panic tore through me. Had they been in a car accident?

Hanging up, I rang Aaron. 'Where's Anderson?' I asked. 'He's not at nursery.' 'What do you mean?' he responded, confused.

A pause, then... 'Oh my God,' Aaron said, frantic. Then hung up. I kept dialling, and Aaron answered his phone.

'Please no... I have to go,' he said. I dashed out in the blazing heat to my car, sped to Aaron's work.

With my phone on loudspeaker, I called the police. 'I think my husband forgot to take my son to nursery this morning,' I gulped. 'He left him in the back seat.'

I pulled up to Aaron's office as police arrived. I prayed we'd arrived in time, that Anderson would be OK.

But Aaron's car was nowhere to be seen and he wasn't answering his phone. We had shared locations on our phones, and I could see that Aaron was back at our house.

The police dispatched officers to go round there. Then my phone rang. It was Aaron, and he sounded completely broken.

'I killed our son, I'm so sorry. I love you,' he said, before the phone went dead. I lay on the grass, unable to take in what I heard.

Then, 10 minutes later, an officer walked over to me. 'Mrs Beck, we're sorry,' they said softly. 'Anderson and Aaron are no longer with us.'

They'd found Anderson inside the house. He'd passed away hours before. Then they had found Aaron in the woods behind our house.

He'd taken his own life. Grief hit instantly and it was crushing. Just that morning, Anderson and I had been watching cartoons in the kitchen, with him eating bananas, while Aaron had been in the shower.

Our perfect little family. In an instant, my whole world had been ripped away. The next few days were a blur while I desperately searched for answers.

It turned out that when Aaron popped back into the



My boys live on in my heart



One of many precious cuddles

house to get his phone that morning, it'd been a change of routine.

Together with us getting a new puppy, and he'd been stressed at work too.

Instead of driving Anderson to nursery, he forgot he was in the back of the car, and went straight to work.

Meanwhile, in the car with the windows up, temperatures soared.

Anderson overheated. By the time Aaron found his body, it was too late. So devastated, Aaron couldn't go on.

After driving Anderson home and placing him gently inside, Aaron went out to the woods.

Facing the prospect of life without Aaron and Anderson was unbearable. I didn't want to keep going.

I replayed the day over in my head, torturing myself with what ifs. In July 2022, Aaron and Anderson had a joint funeral, surrounded by our family and friends.

Loved ones planted trees in their honour, too. It still didn't feel real. How could something like this happen?

Aaron adored Anderson, he was his world.

I knew he'd never do anything to hurt our boy, and thinking of how devastated he'd felt when he realised what'd happened was agony.

I found myself researching hot-car deaths, discovered that, tragically, it happened often and was a real danger, especially in hot climates like our home, Virginia, USA.

As I scrolled through articles, I ached for all the families that'd been torn apart like mine.

Too many innocent children, like Anderson, from loving homes, were being lost to heat stroke in hot cars.

All it took was one awful mistake that anyone could make.

Almost a year on from the accident, in May 2023, I woke up one morning feeling ready to bring something good out of this terrible tragedy.

I found an organisation called Kids and Car Safety, and spoke to its founders, Amber and Janette.

They explained that detection technology exists to alert drivers to a child in their back seat, but not every car is fitted with it.

'I want to start a campaign for Anderson's Law,' I told them.

Requiring manufacturers to include tech to keep kids safe.

With their help, I started sharing my story. Since then, I've worked to spread the word about preventable hot-car deaths, and tell the world about my wonderful husband and son.

I had to move out of our house, so full of memories. I'm still close with Aaron's family - we go on trips and spend the holidays together.

I live alone, but surround myself with reminders of my amazing family.

Aaron's razor hangs by my bathroom mirror, his slippers sit on the floor.

I sleep with one of Anderson's onesies every night, and use his toddler

table and chairs as plant stands in my living room. Facing life without my family is unbearably painful.

We should be preparing to celebrate Anderson's third birthday, and Christmas, together.

The fact that we aren't is so bitterly unfair.

I'll make sure Aaron and Anderson are remembered for the love and happiness they brought into the world.

And if telling my story stops another family suffering like ours, I will. People don't understand how a loving parent can forget their child is in a car.

But, sadly, it happens all too often, to the best of parents.

I know, because it happened to us.

If you're struggling, Samaritans are there day or night, 365 days a year. Call free on 116 123 or visit [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

**STOP THE TRAGEDY**  
Amber Rollins, director of Kids and Car Safety, said, 'We want every car, by law, to have sensors installed that would send an alert to the driver's phone, and their emergency contacts, if a child is left in the back seat. These systems use radar or lidar technology, and can even spot a sleeping baby under a blanket. It can happen to any parent. Government and car manufacturers must act to prevent more tragedies.'