

I thought I'd never smile again!

During major surgery, Vivien Jarvis's teeth were damaged in a medical mishap. She thought her smiling days were over – but Lady Luck gave her a second chance. . . . *By Lucy Laing*

Vivien Jarvis knew she had every reason to smile. Surgeons had successfully removed a massive brain tumour, ending months of agony and saving her life.

But the sight of her happy face in the mirror only made her cringe. 'My front teeth were accidentally knocked out during the surgery,' says the mum-of-three. 'I know it sounds like such a minor thing after coming so close to dying, but I felt so self-conscious and unhappy. I was desperate to get my old smile back.'

Dental treatment would cost £8,000, and Vivien, 49, knew she would never be able to afford the bill. 'Then one day, I entered a competition I saw in a newspaper,' says Vivien. 'And suddenly everything changed...'

In April 2003, Vivien, from Westcliff

in Essex, had no idea how ill she was after she had a dizzy spell at the bank where she worked as a customer services officer.

Soon after, she developed problems with her balance, and suffered from terrible headaches

that left her sobbing with pain, unable to work and confined to bed.

Finally, almost a year later, Vivien was referred to a neurologist at Southend Hospital

in Essex, in March 2004. A brain scan revealed terrible news.

'I nearly fainted when the neurologist told me I had a massive brain tumour,' she says. 'It was benign, but because it was putting such huge pressure on my brain, it was still life-threatening.

That was why I'd been in such agony for a year.

'Luckily, I was told they could operate. It would involve major surgery – but it was the only option to save my life.'

Vivien was transferred to a hospital in London in May last year. But she almost didn't make it. 'I collapsed in the corridor because my brain had swelled so much,' she says. 'If I hadn't gone into theatre immediately, I would have died.'

As she was wheeled into



Vivien loves showing off her new smile, and, inset, the scars from the brain operation that caused her tooth loss



surgery, Vivien said a tearful goodbye to her husband, Keith, 45, not knowing whether she would ever see him again.

But the five-hour operation was a success, and Vivien hardly noticed when a doctor explained that a tube inserted down her throat during surgery had snapped off her front teeth and broken her bridge.

'I had 29 metal staples across my forehead where the surgeons had removed the tumour,' said Vivien. 'I was so relieved it was gone, I didn't even think about my teeth.'

'It was only when I got home eight days later, that I looked in the mirror for the first time. I was horrified by what I saw.

'My awful headaches were gone, which was fantastic. But whenever anyone spoke to me, I would cover my mouth with my hand because I was ashamed of my broken teeth.'

Vivien's embarrassment turned to desperation when a dentist told her that treatment to put the problem right would cost about £8,000.

'Keith constantly tried to reassure me,' she recalls. 'But after a while, I stopped smiling at all.'

'I felt so unhappy. I was desperate to get my old smile back'

'I'd never won anything before and didn't think I had a chance'

Then Vivien read in a newspaper about a cosmetic dentistry practice in Hertford, called Perfect Smile Studio. They were offering one reader the chance to win a smile makeover worth £9,000.

'I'd never won anything before and didn't think I had a chance,' says Vivien. 'So I actually screamed when I got a letter saying I was the winner.'

Last December, Vivien was fitted with 10 new teeth. She also had injections in the wrinkles around her mouth to boost her body's collagen

production, and smooth lines and crevices. 'I had the full works – a new bridge, crowns and veneers to make my new teeth look lovely and white,' says Vivien. 'It did wonders – my lines were gone

and I looked years younger.

'Now I have the most perfect smile and I can look at myself in the mirror without flinching.

'My life is now back on track, and doctors say there's only a 20 per cent chance of the tumour returning – so I've finally got plenty to smile about.'

■ To contact the Perfect Smile Studio, call 0845 600 8200, or visit www.theperfectsmile.co.uk.



Vivien with her husband, Keith. 'I've finally got plenty to smile about,' she says