

◀ CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Heaven's playroom

she said. 'You must pass on this message. Promise me you will.' 'But I can't talk to them,' I pointed out.

'You must tell them that you'll live,' she insisted.

Someone else was standing in the doorway. Michael.

He was smiling, and his head was no longer bandaged.

'Want to play?' he grinned.

He jumped on to a tricycle and rode round the room.

I chased after him, laughing. We played for hours, suddenly

able to touch anything in the room. We never got tired, and there was a lovely atmosphere, as if we were being bathed in love.

Then the shadowy lady stepped forward. 'It's time to go back, Mark,' she said, and she and Michael disappeared.

I opened my eyes, and I was

back in bed again. But how?

'Mark, you're awake! Thank goodness!' cried Mum, giving me a huge hug.

'You've been in a

Why couldn't Dad hear me? I waved my arms, but he clearly couldn't see me either



I tried to climb on the rocking horse

coma for three days. We've been so worried.'

'It's all right Mum,' I assured her. 'The shadowy lady who I met with Michael told me to

tell you that I'm not going to die.'

I could see confusion behind Mum's smile. 'That's nice,' she said.

'But where is Michael?' I asked, spotting his empty bed.

'Darling,' she said. 'I'm afraid that he died last night.'

Even though I was only seven years old, I knew how close I had come to death, and that I'd been with a spirit.

But instead of being afraid, I knew I should be grateful – unlike Michael, I'd been given a chance to live.

I was treated in hospital for a further seven weeks and never saw Michael's spirit again. But I'll always be grateful to him and the shadow for keeping me safe and sending me back to my family.

My husband Anthony and I had been living with my mum for a while and were desperately searching for a place of our own, but the three-bedroom Victorian terrace the estate agent had brought us to looked hideous.

Inside, it was just as bad. Peeling paper hung from the walls, and there were damp patches everywhere.

'It's a lot larger than anything else on the market for the same price,' the agent said encouragingly. 'The owners are extremely keen to sell.'

Heavily pregnant with our first

You marriage wrecker!

Sue Donoghue, 37, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Lancashire



My heart sank as I pushed open the rusty gate

and saw the litter-strewn path.

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Heavily pregnant with our first

child, I had to admit the extra space did seem tempting.

Our low offer was accepted, and a week before my due date, we were ready to move in.

But as we pulled up outside our new home, an overwhelming wave of fear washed over me.

'I can't go in,' I blurted to Anthony. 'I've got a bad feeling about this.'

It was strange. I felt as if we were being watched – and not welcome.

'Don't be daft, love,' laughed Anthony, 26. Nervously, I stepped out of the car, but slotting



Me, Kerry and Anthony

feeling of fear became stronger. Was this why the previous owners were so keen to sell?

Our collie, Ben, seemed to feel it, too. He barked and growled at the fireplace.

Trying to ignore my fears, we set about improving the house, but every time Anthony tried to do some DIY, his tools went missing. To top it all, we'd begun to argue.

I put it down to the stress of being pregnant, but after our daughter Kerry was born in August 1993, the tension got worse, along with the strange goings-on. Keys disappeared, ornaments swapped places, and each morning, Kerry's toys were strewn all over the floor, even though I'd put them away the night before.

Then, when Kerry was just a few weeks old, I caught her pointing and gurgling into thin air.

'She's just a baby,' Anthony

shrugged when I told him. 'It's what they do.'

But I was unconvinced. Something other-worldly was to blame, I felt sure of it.

Then one day, while sitting in the front room, a loud male voice boomed out: 'You!'

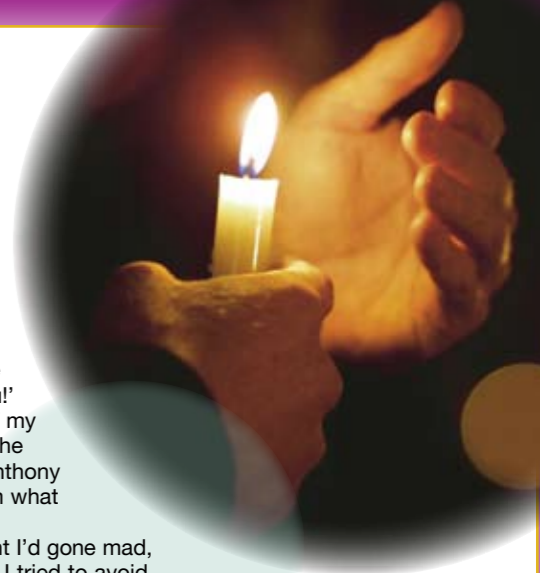
I jumped out of my skin. Rushing to the phone, I called Anthony at work to tell him what had happened.

Anthony thought I'd gone mad, but from then on, I tried to avoid being alone at home.

One day, I opened a cupboard in the kitchen and found a photo of a man and woman inside.

I showed it to my neighbour. 'They lived in your house many years ago,' she explained. 'Their son died there as a child.'

My eyes widened in horror. Was that photo a warning to us? I kept praying that things would



get better, but one night, Anthony was working late and I was alone in the house for the first time in ages. I was standing on the landing upstairs when a grey, misty shape loomed towards me. It was about 3ft wide.

Then, as quickly as it appeared, the fog vanished into thin air. Heart pounding, I raced downstairs to the phone. There was only one thing left to do, so I called a local medium.

'Please help me,' I cried, tears pouring down my cheeks. Gently, the medium told me what was wrong with the house.

'I sense you've got three spirits in your home,' she said. 'One's a little boy who hides things for fun and is harmless. He put the photo in the cupboard for you to find.' She paused. 'But one of the other spirits is a man who's trying to scare you.'

'The last spirit is your father, Albert, who appears as a mist and is here to look after you.'

My stomach lurched. Was Dad really here? He'd passed away suddenly just before we moved in, and I really missed him.

'He's trying to stop the other man from frightening you,' the medium continued. 'If it wasn't for him, the place would be in chaos.'

Putting down the phone, I felt much calmer.

With Dad looking after us, maybe we'd come to no harm.

I told Anthony about it when he got in. 'How many times

The man in the mac took my babies

Anne Sharman, 54, New Eltham, South London



Not long to go now,' I thought as I checked off the calendar.

I was six months' pregnant with my second baby.

My husband Andy and I were already blessed with a beautiful son, Chris, who was then aged two, and one more child would make our family complete.

That night, Andy and I watched telly before heading off to bed. It was still dark when I woke up with a start.

To my horror, a man was standing a few inches from my side of the bed. He was ghost-like, and I knew he was a spirit. The man wore a mac with a belt round the middle, and a trilby hat.

Terrified, I tried to grab Andy. But I couldn't move anything apart from my eyes. I was paralysed.

I stared at him, petrified. Who was he? What did he want?

Desperate for help, I strained my eyes towards Andy, willing him to wake up, but he was fast asleep.

The man's face was hidden under his hat, but as he looked

down at me, I suddenly felt a sense of calm spread throughout my body.

I was sure he didn't mean me any harm, and my fear melted away.

Moments later, the man vanished, and suddenly I could move again.

My heart pounding, I got out of bed and switched on the light, waking Andy.

I told him what I'd seen. He didn't know what to think. Neither of us had experienced anything like this before.

I didn't sleep a wink after that – I couldn't stop thinking about the man in the mac. Who was he? Why had he come? I was sure he was connected to my unborn baby, but how?

The next day was the August bank

holiday. Andy, Chris and I were at home when my waters broke.

I knew it was too early. I was only 26 weeks pregnant – and back then, in the late 1970s, they didn't have the premature baby care they have today.

Andy rushed me to hospital, but there was nothing they could do.

I had to go through a full labour, even though I'd already lost the baby. It was a terrible time. Andy and I were devastated. But over the next few weeks, the man in the mac kept popping into my mind.

I was sure he'd come to take the baby, but I didn't feel anger towards him. I knew in my heart he was there to take care of my child on the other side.

A few months later, I became pregnant again, but all the way through, I just didn't feel right.

Even though the hospital and the midwife assured me everything was fine, I knew the man in the mac would come again and take my baby.

I couldn't bear the thought of losing another child, but I knew

that the man in the mac would look after both of them.

Unsurprisingly, at 26 weeks pregnant, I woke up in the night, and the man in the mac was beside me. Andy slept through the whole thing.

Again, my fear melted away. I knew why he'd come. He wanted to let me know the baby was going to be safe with him, and I felt a peaceful calm spread through my body.

I didn't say anything to Andy as I didn't want him to think I'd gone mad.

But sure enough, the next day, at a friend's party, my waters broke.

'I'm going to lose the baby,' I told the hospital staff.

I was right. There was nothing anyone could do. My baby was dead.

I was utterly distraught. I'd already lost two babies – maybe I just wasn't meant to have more children.

A year passed, and we tried our best to put the past behind us.

Then I fell pregnant again. I was a nervous wreck, terrified each night

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that the man would appear by my bed.

At 24 weeks gone, I woke up in the night with a start.

'No!' I screamed inside my head. 'You're not going to take another baby.'

But the man in the mac wasn't there. Instead, there was a warm golden glow beside the bed.

'It's all right,' said a gentle voice. 'Everything's going to be OK.'

The glow formed into the shape of a huge angel with a beautiful, caring face and large wings.

I felt completely at peace. As I watched, the angel gradually faded away. I knew it had come instead of the man in the mac.

So when my baby boy Alex was born at 32 weeks in February 1980, I was confident he'd be fine – and he was!

Today, my boys are fully grown – Chris is 32 and Alex is 28 – but I've never forgotten the angel or the man in the mac.

Recently, I was at an angel workshop and we got chatting about strange experiences over a cuppa.

Besides Andy, I'd never told anyone about the man in the mac,



Me and Andy with Alex (far left) and Chris (far right)

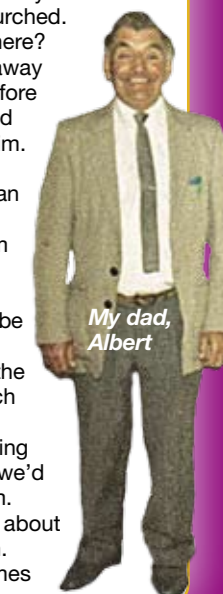
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My family was complete!



Andy and Chris with Alex



My dad, Albert

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