

An Angel by My Side

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Extract

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CHAPTER 1

Mystical Mum

How did I get here? What was it about? Was it her smile?
Was it the way she crossed her legs, the turn of her ankle,
the poignant vulnerability of her slender wrists?

**Martin Sage and Sybil Adelman, *Northern Exposure:*
The Bumpy Road to Love, 1991**

‘I’ve done a lot of research. It’s fascinating, and I’m really hooked. Even though people in your family die ... they’re not dead. I mean they are, but they’re not.’ I gushed to my dad over coffee one day. He smiled politely.

‘I’ve discovered that spirits have the ability to manipulate energy, especially electrical and clockwork items,’ I babbled on. ‘It’s how they let us know they are still alive!’ I added breathlessly.

I think Mum had gone shopping with my sister and Dad always loved a good gossip so I’d driven round the corner to visit him. It really was ‘just’ around the corner. I was lucky that my parents lived a five-minute walk away but I usually drove as I always seemed too busy to stop and enjoy

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the short walk, even though I visited them several times a week.

A busy mum with two teenage daughters of my own, I always seemed to be rushing from one project to the next. Books for review were stacked up on my desk and a whole carrier bag full of readers' letters from my magazine column, all with questions about readers' psychic and paranormal experiences, were waiting for personal replies. I was halfway through my third book on angel and afterlife communication experiences, and wary of the looming deadlines, but the research was really exhilarating. I was keen to chat about it to anyone who might listen ... or not ... and dads always listen, don't they!

I rushed on excitedly about my latest research.

'After our loved ones pass over to heaven, they come back and let you know that they are okay, that they are still alive in some way. I have hundreds of stories now from all over the world, Dad. They come in their spirit bodies and visit people in dreams, and make the lights flicker and things. I really believe that we don't die ... at least not in the way that we think!'

Dad looked on kindly. Did he think I was crazy? Bless him, he never said, and he just smiled fondly in the way that dads do.

I'd been sharing a weird story I'd read about a music box. Paranormal, I guess you would call it. A woman had inherited all of her mother's jewellery after she'd died, but couldn't find her mother's precious pearl necklace. Sitting in her

mother's home after the funeral, the woman wondered where the necklace might have gone. As she was thinking about the problem, a family music box started playing inside a locked cupboard. It was a musical jewellery box and it had sat in the cupboard, without being wound up, for some time.

The woman opened the cupboard and lifted out the box which was playing inside, and when she opened it up she found the missing pearls inside. The music box had given the clue to where they were hiding. It was a great story but was it just a coincidence? I just loved it.

I looked at my watch and sighed. Wary of the mountain of writing I needed to complete by the end of the day, I picked up my coat and leant over to kiss Dad goodbye, thinking of how much he looked like his deceased brother, Eric. Eric was a cherished and much missed family member.

'When I leave, Uncle Eric will do something to let you know he's been here nosing in on our conversation again today,' I joked. 'You know he will want to show us this is all true.'

As the words left my lips, we heard the smoke alarm give a single bleep and we both burst out laughing. Good timing! Had my late Uncle Eric communicated his visit from the afterlife? I know that he did.

Later on that day, Dad told me he'd checked the smoke alarm just in case, and the battery was fine. Was this a coincidence, or perhaps another piece in the afterlife communication puzzle?

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The lights often flickered at my parents' house, and anywhere the family gathered for special events together. If we mentioned Uncle Eric's name the lights would always begin to flash, almost to indicate that he had joined in the family fun. We knew he was with us.

Was it more amazing coincidences or was my uncle really communicating with us from beyond the grave? We were certainly convinced, and each time a light went on and off we all laughed and said, 'Hello Eric.' It wasn't a frightening thing, just a bit of family fun and I guess a great comfort. We never like to think that our loved ones really leave us when they die, and I'm totally convinced they don't.

We felt him around us a lot. I remember another time I was sitting in my living room late one night. It was 1 am and I was snuggled down on the sofa in our dimly lit living room with my head in my hands. I was feeling very distressed about a problem at the small 'new age' store where I worked part time when I suddenly felt the familiar presence in the room with me. I knew it was Uncle Eric. How? I just sort of felt it – you know, in the same way that you 'feel' when someone is looking at you behind your back. Those eyes piercing into your back ... you just know.

'Is that you Eric?' I asked out loud. The lights flickered on cue in the living room and I laughed. He had announced his arrival in the usual way.

'Flash the lights once for yes, and twice for no,' I joked. The lights flicked once more. I swear we had a five-minute conversation using the yes/no system before I felt his

energy pull away! I can't prove it to you, no one was physically there – but I knew it was him! He'd cheered me up a lot! I knew then it was time for bed. I needed to 'sleep on it', as they say.

The next day I decided that the problem with my shop job was that I needed to not be there. I decided to leave. I needed to concentrate on my writing. Writing was what I wanted to do for a living and I was just getting more and more frustrated spending my day doing something I didn't want to do. The following day I handed in my notice. The shop owner seemed very upset with me but I meant nothing malicious by it, it was a personal decision only. I had to follow my own dreams, I needed to be elsewhere.

The next few days were difficult at work. There was a serious tension in the air but I was sad to leave the staff who had become very good friends. I'd been at the shop for a few months – I actually began working for the owner before the shop even opened. Initially, I'd been looking for a part-time job so that I could still meet people whilst I wrote from home. I didn't want to be isolated totally, and the job in an alternative/new age store seemed the perfect choice.

As the weeks went by I'd ended up doing more and more hours in the shop. I needed to be home to meet the girls after school but due to lack of staff I found myself having to work much later than agreed. As the most experienced member of staff, I became the shop manager by default. I was now beginning to resent the whole thing. I'd only ever wanted

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to work a couple of days but now my part-time day job was taking over my life and I was beginning to hate it.

Had Eric picked up on my misery when he came and flickered my living room lights that night? I'd wondered whether our relatives on the other side could zoom in on our strong emotions like a distress call; I've since discovered that they do.

I had two more days' notice to work, but when I woke up the following morning, I knew I wouldn't be able to go in that day, but what could I do? I really did feel ill, but felt guilty, too, that I should be working my last two days.

I looked skywards and sighed. 'Angels? Can anyone help me?'

I had no idea who I was talking to in the seemingly empty room but I felt sure that someone, somewhere in the Universe would hear my silent cry!

'If I'm not meant to go into work then I need a big sign and I need it now!'

The phone rang immediately. Seriously – it rang the moment the words left my lips. It was a good friend, a local Reiki healing teacher and she needed my help.

'Jacky, I've had someone let me down for my class. Would you be able to come over? I just need someone to lie on a couch so that my students can practise healing on them. Oh, and I always do a vegetarian home-cooked lunch. You'd be doing me a great favour,' she said. 'I know you've done Reiki I and II before but I thought you might enjoy doing it again.'

I laughed but she'd no idea why. Let me see ... go into work or lie on a couch and be 'healed'? I had my answer. Had the angels stepped in, or was it Uncle Eric intervening? I didn't mind either way.

As it turned out, my friend needed my help for both days of her two-day course, so I decided to join in the Reiki class, and then later I did the next course and the next. I was ready for a change of direction. Was this yet another coincidence? Yes, I'd done the healing course before but never had I needed healing more than I needed it at that moment.

We always feel stressed and depressed when we find our lives or aspects of our lives are out of control. Part of my life was out of control. This was definitely one of those times for me. The only way to move forward when we suffer from stress is to change something in our lives; to get back in control of one small aspect of it.

Of course, sometimes we can't control the very thing which is making us depressed. If someone has died, for example, we can't bring them back: all we can do is change the way we feel about it. It's hard, I know.

Mourning the loss of a loved one is a natural thing to do. Some people take years to recover a normal sense of life and others may find that laughter comes again after a few months. It doesn't mean we love them less but we deal with stress in our own way.

Mourning is about feelings of loss for the time we never had together. Moving on is about celebrating the

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wonderful life they had and the opportunity we were given to share that love for however long or short a time. I wanted to teach the message that I felt my own spiritual helpers were bringing me, but first I had to live some of the lessons myself.

Eric 'called' a lot at that time, and although I never saw him then, it was clear that my little dog Lady could. I felt Eric come into my living room for a visit one sunny afternoon a short while later. It was that same knowing, that same feeling. Something in the very air around me had changed.

'Is that you Eric?' I asked the empty room.

Lady, my Lancashire Heeler, was jumping up and down in excitement and lifted herself up onto her hind legs. She was sniffing and looking at something in mid-air. What could she see? As anyone might, I checked the room for insects or some other distraction but it was clear that the excitement was for something, or someone else!

'If that's you Eric, get Lady to pick up her newspaper chew toy and bring it over here!' I asked, confident of a failure.

Lady was lovely, but not the most intelligent dog in the world. I had given my spirit friend a difficult task indeed ... or had I? Lady immediately ran over to her squeaky toy, then jumped back as if someone was there! She rushed at it again and picked it up before turning around and bringing it over to me and planting it proudly on the floor at my feet. Amazing!

I thought about it a lot afterwards. Had my little dog

suddenly learnt a new trick? Had she at that moment understood my words? Had she been wagging her tail at some microscopic fly? No, seriously, whatever way I looked at it, the obvious solution seemed to fit better. She had seen a spirit visitor and followed their instructions rather than my own. Eric was there and although I had sensed my spirit visitor, Lady had actually seen him. I LOVED this!

I've had many encounters with my spirit friends and not just Eric. Eric, because he had been my uncle, was the easiest to recognize when he visited but others also came in 'dreams'.

My first spirit visitation 'dream' was from an old school friend. Guy had died of cancer in his twenties and it was a real tragedy. We grew up together. As soon as he appeared in the dream I immediately became lucid (I was aware that this was not a normal dream and my visitor was actually dead). Even though I was aware that my body was asleep my mind was perfectly awake. This was real, and I knew it was, even at the time.

'Guy! How lovely to see you. Why are you here? You're dead aren't you?'

A short conversation followed about the fact that he had come because he could. I felt like he was testing a new skill. I chatted to my late friend in his spirit body, although I remembered none of the conversation afterwards. I asked him questions about the meaning of life – why are we here and what is our role in life? I obviously wasn't supposed to remember the answers to those. Shame!

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I remember asking him, ‘Can I pass on a message to anyone for you?’ I assumed he had visited me for some higher spiritual reason.

He just told me no, and said it was time to go. Two chairs, me and Guy, sitting in an otherwise empty room – that was it. But even then, I knew it wasn’t a normal dream. It was so real, so vivid, so different from a normal dream, and I knew I was talking to a dead person, and that it was okay to be doing so. And that’s part of the reason why a ‘dream’ visitation is used, because we accept things that we would be unable to do in normal waking life!

It was my first dream visitation but it certainly wasn’t my last.

CHAPTER 2

I'm Still Here

One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvellous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day.

Albert Einstein

Eric first introduced himself when he bounced in on a spirit board one afternoon. Well, actually it was a table full of felt-tip letters, A–Z, and the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’ stuck around a table at the home of a local medium, but it was the same principle. My sister Debbie and I had gone along for a reading on the recommendation of a friend. I’d had readings before at psychic fairs but I’d never been very impressed. This time would be different, I knew it.

I’d never met the medium, but I’d had the strangest urge to take her some flowers. I ‘saw’ something specific in my mind’s eye, a potted miniature rose. When I got to the shops I went to buy my usual white flowers but was drawn to

the yellow roses. Why was I buying flowers for a woman I'd never met?

On the way over in the car, Debbie and I chatted about which of our deceased loved ones we were hoping to visit. Would any of our relatives really come and chat to us through the medium?

Perhaps our Nan would come through or maybe Mum's lovely friend Pat who had passed just six months before, and was still very much in our minds. Wouldn't it be great if Uncle Eric made an appearance? He was such a funny man and we missed him such a lot. We chatted excitedly about what might or might not happen, and in no time at all we pulled up outside the medium's house.

Sandra was a small lady and she explained how she'd been 'poorly'. She made us a cup of tea in her very tiny kitchen, and as an unexpected bonus Sandra had her friend Janice helping out for the night. It looked like we were going to have two readings for the price of one.

Embarrassed, I handed over the plant to Sandra. She seemed pleased but confused. I found myself mumbling about how I'd felt drawn to buy her the flowers but I didn't know why. The medium explained that a dear friend of hers had always bought her yellow flowers when she'd visited. She felt that the roses were a gift from 'spirit'. I wondered if a passing spirit had manipulated me into buying the plant or if it was a wild stretch of my imagination. Perhaps it was just me after all?

Janice waited patiently before handing Debbie and me

a sheet of paper each. Each sheet had a circle drawn in the middle. We were intrigued as pots of paint sat on the table. She sat us down and had us drop splats of paint into the middle of the paper. We had no idea what we were doing or why, but it was a lot of fun. She carefully folded the paper in half and smoothed the two sides together before opening them up and giving us both a reading based on the smears of paint on the paper. I have to say that it just looked like a big smudge of colour to me but she seemed to see something else.

'Look at the angel shape on the paper,' said Janice (I couldn't really see it). 'Look, can you see, it looks like angel wings ... and lots of purple, that's a very spiritual colour.'

Hmm, interesting. She wasn't to know that I had already started collecting angel stories with the idea that one day I might write a book. Maybe she could read something in the paint after all. How disbelieving I was in those days.

We hadn't yet finished our tea but as we'd finished our paintings we were keen to get on with our other reading. We followed the medium and her friend upstairs to a small bedroom with a sofa, a smaller armchair and a collection of small tables; there were even chairs and a cupboard crammed into the tiny space. This was the reading room.

She looked so normal. I guess I didn't know what to expect but if I'm honest I suppose I was a little surprised she wasn't wearing a purple cloak with stars on it and a pointy hat. Sandra started her reading.

'I have a woman here. She's quite snooty, stuck up. No,

that sounds rude and I feel embarrassed now that I know she can hear me say that. Sorry, love. I don't mean stuck up, I mean posh. Oh dear ... well, you know what I mean.'

We laughed and she continued.

'She's very well dressed and she's showing me that she liked nice things and expensive holidays.'

We both leaned forward on the tiny sofa. This was good stuff and we looked at each other before nodding in agreement. This person sounded familiar.

'She's showing me a ring.'

'Um, maybe,' Debbie added.

'Yes,' I said, 'I think I understand.'

Mum's friend Pat had given my mother a brooch and a gold ring set with a large crystal stone about two years before she died. It seemed a strange thing to do because Pat was several years younger than my mother and I remember thinking at the time that it was more usual to hand down jewellery rather than hand it up. But Pat had sons rather than daughters of her own. Maybe she thought that the pieces might go to her friend's daughters after she passed? I'd hoped so, as she was like an aunt to us, and it would be natural for Mum to pass us the jewellery at some future date.

The stone in the ring looked like a large solitaire diamond and we jokingly called it the 'Elizabeth Taylor' ring. It was a ring I had coveted a lot and I occasionally borrowed it. I secretly wondered if this was the ring she meant, but I was wary of giving anything away so said nothing. My

Mum promised to leave it to me in her will, but I teased her that I would get a real diamond instead.

'Hang on, I'm getting a name now. Pat?'

Debbie and I both slumped back on the sofa in relief. It was Pat! How exciting that she'd given us a great description but then the name too. I was impressed, it wasn't as if she'd given us a whole list of names ... just the one. The medium smiled and we stopped and had a mouthful of tea before she carried on.

I looked around the room. It was fairly dark and dusty in Sandra's spare room. I knew the medium had been unwell for a long time and when I looked at her now she looked frail. A twinge of guilt hit me in the stomach. Sandra had put off our appointment twice due to ill health and I remembered how anxious I'd felt for our visit, feeling a little cross inside about the inconvenience of the delay. She had a long waiting list and each cancellation meant another wait of several months.

Now as I looked around the room I wanted to search out a duster and rush around the room with it, to help her in some way. But I knew if I'd have even mentioned such a thing I would have totally offended her. The poor woman. Of course she would be offended. What did the dust matter anyway, she wasn't bothered by it so why should I be? Random thoughts flickered through my mind as I heard gentle chatter in the background. For a moment I just totally zoned out. She was talking to my sister Debbie.

Unusual objects seemed to have been left in the room.

A sweater was folded over the back of a chair and a strange newspaper cutting was propped up on the mantelpiece of what would have once been a fireplace. Also on the mantelpiece was a pair of mismatched glasses: one was a wine glass and the other a short tumbler. They seemed out of place. Had someone had a drink and left the glasses in the room? Both had been decorated with glass paints in bright reds and orange. The room was a little untidy and I guess I had wanted mystical chic.

You don't comment on other people's things unless you are going to say something nice and I couldn't think of anything to say which would have made any sense. I realized I had been staring and someone was talking to me. I turned back to face the medium and I smiled as she handed me a pack of tarot cards.

'Shuffle the cards, dear, and place eight of them on the table. No make it ten, no fifteen.'

Debbie and I looked at each other. We were excited and bemused.

'Yes that's it, place them face down on the table. Ok now turn up the first two or three.'

She began talking again and I blurred in and out. Debbie was furiously scribbling notes for me whilst the medium gave me a reading from the tarot cards. I felt that the reader was using the cards more for my benefit than her own. As I turned over each card at her request I noticed she didn't even look at them.

'I see you writing,' she said. I nodded. 'Writing a book.'

In fact, although it's going to be slow at first, eventually you're going to have more work than you can handle. You're going to write a lot.'

I grinned and looked at Debbie who was trying to note it all down as fast as she could. Sandra asked me to place another ten cards face down on the table and turn over half of them. Again she didn't look at the cards.

'I do write, actually. I've just started.' I muttered.

'Good, good. Yes I can see you on TV.'

'TV? Really? Not radio?'

In my mind I'd thought that one day I'd like to go on radio and chat about my new research into angels and the afterlife, but I'd never thought I would go on television.

'Yes, radio too but TV, lots of TV. You're going to be well known.'

'I am? Cool!'

I was thrilled. Was I giving something away in my body language? But why was I pleased about going on television. Am I shallow? Did it matter?

'You'll have published your first book within eighteen months, they're telling me. Then there'll be others ... lots more.'

As it happened, that book took a little longer, about two years actually, before it finally hit the shops, but whether the event was pre-ordained or I'd been encouraged to succeed by the message I'll never know.

I was desperate to know more but she asked me to pick up the cards and pass them to my sister. It was her turn now

and I scribbled furiously until her turn ended, way too soon. I could see how people became addicted to this stuff! Perhaps it's the ego hearing what it wants, taking what it wants from the message. But she'd already started talking again.

'I have another lady here, on your mother's side,' she began. 'She's with someone, her husband I think, and they are showing me a horse and cart. He's making deliveries door to door.'

We both nodded again. Could this be granddad? He used to be a milkman.

'Now I'm seeing a bakery. It's connected to the lady. She's making cakes and things.'

We weren't sure but later Mum reminded us that our Nan worked for years in a bakery called 'The Home Made'. How could we have forgotten this piece of family history?

'You don't know? That's okay. Write it down, she says, and ask your Mum later. She'll tell you. The lady is showing herself surrounded by children, loads of them, and she's wearing a uniform.' She continued.

This was brilliant stuff. How could she have known? Our nan had worked in an orphanage for years and years. There were pictures at our parents' house of Nan in her uniform with her starched white apron, surrounded by forty or fifty children!

There were other relatives who came with messages that night. Brief appearances were made by friends and relatives

from both sides of the family. I remember looking at my watch again. We had already been at her home for two hours and I wondered if it was time to go. Was she going to ask us to leave now?

‘Do you want to have a go on the table?’ she asked.

Debbie shrugged and smiled.

She beckoned us to stand up and behind her armchair was a low glass table. Stuck on the table were the letters of the alphabet spread out in a big sweep all around the edge. The table was set up to look like a ouija board, or a ‘talking board’. She reached over and picked up one of the glasses from the mantel and I suddenly realized what the painted glasses were for! They hadn’t just been left in the room. When I looked closer they were quite pretty. Maybe someone had made them for her as a gift? The glasses were to be our pointers, to move around the table to spell out words – messages from the other side?

Momentarily, I was nervous. Weren’t these things dangerous? I had a flashback, memories of one day as a teenager. Sitting in my parents’ old house, my sisters and a couple of friends and I had laid out our own felt-tip letters in a variation of what kids all over the world call ‘ask the glass’. We taped the letters onto the back of an old drinks tray and ceremoniously selected one of the best sherry glasses out of the cabinet before placing our fingers on the glass to ask our first question.

As someone called out, ‘Is anybody there?’ the glass began to move at once and we all ran in different directions.

‘Did you push that?’

‘No! Of course not, you know I wouldn’t do that. Swear it wasn’t you! Go on, swear.’

‘I didn’t move it, it wasn’t me. Oh my God, oh my God, do you think it was a spirit?’

‘It wasn’t me, really it wasn’t. Swear it wasn’t you!’

Someone was crying. We were all so scared that we never really got started. I remember someone suggesting that we burned the letters so that the spirits wouldn’t get us. I think we probably flushed them down the toilet or something but that was the first and the last time I had done anything like that ... until now.

The medium was explaining what to do and had already muttered some words of protection before placing her finger on the glass and indicating that we do the same. The four of us sat around the table and the medium began to ask questions.

What on earth were we doing? I felt like a naughty schoolgirl but of course we were not naughty – we were adults and we were doing this on purpose. I tried to calm myself down; after all, ‘the medium is in charge and she must know what she is doing’, I rationalized!

The glass spun over to the letter ‘V’ and then the letter ‘I’. What was that? I felt disappointed. The medium began chatting in a very normal tone as if a neighbour had popped in to say hello.

‘Is that you, Vi?’

The glass moved over to the word ‘yes’.

I felt annoyed again. 'We are paying for this and she is chatting to her friends', I thought crossly, but unreasonably. I felt like a real cow. A spirit friend had crossed the dimensions to communicate and I was quibbling about who it was. Maybe this Vi would be able to hear my thoughts? She would know what I was thinking, she would know that I was a cow.

'Sorry, Vi love, I'm with clients tonight. It's lovely of you to pop in for a visit. Could you come again another night?'

The glass went back to the word 'yes' again and the medium explained about her old friend and then apologized. I figured it was not really her fault, after all. Did it even matter? What was wrong with me? Why was I thinking like this tonight? I immediately felt guilty again. Perhaps it was nerves.

'Would anyone else like to come for a chat?' she asked randomly.

The glass went to the letter 'E', then 'R', 'I' and 'C'. Debbie and I looked at each other and I noticed the tears prick her eyes.

'Eric?'

'Who's Eric, love?'

'My Dad's brother.'

Debbie was sobbing quietly now.

'Is everything okay? Are you happy to talk to Eric?'

'Yes, we're fine. Yes, yes everything is okay, she's just very happy. We both are.'

A single tear was rolling down my cheek and I brushed

it away. I was the calm one. I was fine with all of this, wasn't I? I shouldn't have been crying.

Oh my God. Was this Uncle Eric? This was the first communication since he'd died and we hardly dared believe it was true. Excitement hit the pit of my stomach and I felt both sick and slightly dizzy at the same time. We were convinced it was him but disappointingly, Sandra was not.

'Well, you must test them, love. Always check that they are who they say they are. Go on, ask a question. Ask him something like, "What did he do for a living?" Find out if it's really him.'

I didn't want to. What if it was some fake spirit trying to trick us? I wanted to believe it was my uncle. We didn't ask the question because the glass was already moving. It was spelling out a reply. SEW.

'Sew? No, that can't be right, can it?' The medium exchanged confused glances with her friend. 'Surely he means something else, he didn't sew for a living did he?'

Debbie and I both nodded before explaining that Uncle Eric did sew for a living; he was an upholsterer. I'd been trying to think of a short word which might suggest the answer, and the word which sprung to mind was upholstery. Not short exactly. Debbie was thinking of the word SOFA, but SEW was just fine too. We both started laughing in a hysterical sort of way. Sew was a good word. It gave us what we needed. He'd passed the test. It really was Eric.

We asked a lot more questions. At one point both Sandra

and Janice lifted their fingers off the glass. Debbie and I were aware that the glass continued to move even after they had done so, although it moved a little slower. We were working the glass with the spirits, Debbie and I. Maybe, just maybe, we could do this at home? Perhaps we didn't need the medium after all – can we talk to the spirits, just the two of us, any time we wanted to?

I honestly don't remember much else. We chatted some more. I think I'd reached saturation point. We'd already received so much proof and I couldn't wait to go home and tell everyone about it.

Again, I know that other relatives came through. We still have the notes somewhere. After the medium 'closed down' the communication on the table I was ready to go home, but she was ready for more. I looked at my watch and we'd now been at her house for over three hours. We'd certainly had our money's worth, and I was tired. She was so kind, wanting to make sure we were happy with our evening.

'We didn't have time to do the spirit in the mirror,' the medium said, almost disappointed.

We knew what 'spirit in the mirror meant', as our friend had told us about this after her own visit. Sandra turned out all but a small red light and we squinted at the mirror.

'Soften your eyes. Can you see anything? Is there anyone in the mirror?'

The idea was that in the half light you could often see spirit images overlay your own. It wasn't that they distorted your face so much as the spirit face seemed to float over

your own. I was only half listening. This was a fascinating exercise but there was nothing left in me to give. I'd already put on my coat and my mind was 'on the way home'. We decided to call it a day ... or a night.

We walked down the stairs, both of us in a slight daze. What an extraordinary night! It was one I don't think I will ever forget. I'd had paranormal experiences all of my life. I always believed there must be something else going on in the world – another world, another life, an afterlife. There was no longer any doubt. I knew there was something else, something out there, something in there.

As for Eric, this was the first of many visits. We handed over our very small fee to the medium on our way out. It seemed way too little for the time she'd spent on us. I pressed another five pound note into her hands but she refused the money. I insisted. I felt the evening was worth a lot more and eventually she took the money, but handed it over to her friend Janice.

'Thank you both. It's been a great evening.'

As we drove home we talked about the night. Was it too late to call at Mum's on the way home? It was late and we agreed we'd both go over as soon as Debbie finished work the next day. There was a lot to share, and a long list of things to check out. Our loved ones live on after they pass, and after tonight, I knew for sure.