

In a thought provoking book, Susan Phoenix describes how she overcame grief through the power of the universe – including angels. She talks to **SARAH FOSTER**

Heaven sent?: Susan Phoenix, below, credits angels with helping her recovery from the loss of her husband

Picture: the Northern Lights Film Festival



How angels helped me find my wings

SUSAN Phoenix, a trained nurse and psychologist for the deaf, had found herself in an odd situation. Despite her scepticism, she was sitting in a circle as angel expert Diana Cooper led a session. With a sharp awakening came a startling sight.

"Diana Cooper was talking about ascended masters, which are angels from the universe, and I saw shadowy figures that looked like Darth Vader," says Susan, 56. "They were standing behind Diana. I leaned over to this girl and said, 'What can you see?' and she could see exactly what I saw. That same girl then did a healing with me and it was Ian's voice. He was saying, 'You don't have to let me go so soon.'"

That was in England, years after Ian, Susan's husband, had died. A leading member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) in Northern Ireland, he had lived there happily with his family. Then in 1994, his helicopter crashed on the Mull of Kintyre. "There was a fault with the helicopter," says Susan, who still feels angry that blame was levelled at the flight crew.

The outcome was the RUC's worst peacetime tragedy, claiming 29 lives. It left Susan and her children devastated. "My life was Ian," she says. "I was a young, dedicated nurse of 19 when I met this man who totally changed my life. I now know that we knew great love that some people never have. I went off the track - I'd lost my dream and when you lose that, it's the hardest thing to try and rediscover."

In the first few weeks of grief and numbness, the family stuck together, with Susan's son Niven, then 21, and daughter Nicola, 26, providing comfort. Support from many friends, whom Ian and Susan had always valued, was also crucial. "One thousand five hundred people coming to the funeral was quite amazing," says Susan. "I learned that people were very good and it was some-



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thing I needed to hang on to."

Yet just as she was trying to fight her loss, she faced another crippling blow - the deaths of both her parents. This, along with Niven almost dying in a car crash, made Susan start to give up hope. "Within six months, I'd lost three of my close family. It was one funeral after another. It was like it was meant to be - I had to lose all of these roots

to totally start again," she says.

Desperate to preserve her husband's memory - and fulfil his life's ambition - Susan set about writing his memoirs. The end result was Phoenix: Policing the Shadows, co-written with her friend Jack Holland. An inside take on the troubles in Northern Ireland, it became a bestseller. Yet when the project was complete, Susan lost her sense of purpose.

"I spent nine months writing and 12 months doing publicity afterwards. That kept me on a high. After that, I went down the tubes," she says.

It was during this dark time that friendship helped her once again, when a woman she knew in Belfast gave her complementary therapies. Looking back, Susan sees this as the start of her recovery. "I had been having aromatherapy and reflexology with a friend," she says. "She referred me to a kinesiologist (muscle specialist). I was lying there with a lump of rose quartz on my midriff thinking, 'This is ridiculous', but I could feel the release happening. It was just like someone pressing a switch and letting it all out."

When the therapist suggested that Susan join her on the angels course, she was far from keen. "I thought it was a load of old tosh but I went and it was the best thing I've ever done," she says.

Although she felt "like I was cracking up" when visions appeared to her, including the ascended masters, the idea of another dimension struck a chord. "As a child I'd seen spirits but I'd just been told by the family, 'Susan's a bit weird', so I began to think I hadn't really seen them," she says. "Society conditions us not to talk about things like that."

Having received the message from Ian, she realised that instead of tackling her grief, she had tried to bury it, thinking that was what her husband would have wanted. Now she knew different - "I'd decided I had to be

that Ian would have expected me to be," says Susan. "When you obliterate things, you don't know what you're feeling. I think you need to know when you're feeling down to know when you're better."

There followed a long process of healing, in which Susan moved to France. Building on her experiences, she learned to draw strength from the universe - including angels and her husband's spirit. From her latest home in Spain, she now helps others overcome their problems.

"I do energy work, aromatherapy, foot massage, guided meditation... I seem to know what people need," she says. "I think for me it's about letting people know that they're their own best friend. We are all very wise beings - we just have to trust our intuition."

Susan admits she still has low points, when she takes time out to meditate, but says she's mainly happy. "It's taken a long time but I feel I have balance," she says. "For a while now I've felt really very happy, very serene and very peaceful."

● **Out of the Shadows: a Journey back from Grief by Susan Phoenix (Hodder Mobius, £10.99). For more information on Susan's work, visit www.phoenixplanes.com**

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