

My dead twin saved my life

For Michele Knight, 42, the bond between twins was too strong to break – even in death

Sitting in a café, under the blistering Italian sun, I sneaked a glance at my mother, Bruna, as I took another sip of my drink.

We were on holiday, and because she was born in Italy, Mum felt relaxed here. Now was as good a time as any I thought.

She was only a tiny woman, but her temper could be fierce. I was 14 and scared, but there was a question I needed her to answer.

"I had a twin who died at birth, didn't I?" I asked, bracing myself for the fallout. Instead, she turned as white as chalk.

"Don't be silly," she spluttered, shifting uncomfortably in her chair and avoiding my gaze. "Who told you that?"

"I just know," I said quietly. Wiping tears from her eyes, my mother reached for her cigarettes.

"How did you know that?" she whispered. "Only your father knew about her, and he's dead."

"She told me, Mum," I admitted. "She's been talking to me for as long as I can remember – I feel like she's looking after me."

Suddenly, the atmosphere lifted as my mother sank into her chair.

"Did you give her a name?" I asked, holding my breath.

In my diary, I'd called her 'Lucy' "Luciana Rosa," she smiled.

"We'd have called her Lucy."

If I needed proof, then hearing her name was it. Lucy was real.

For as long as I could remember, Lucy had been with me. Not in a

ghostly way, but as a voice, talking to me, telling me to be careful. I was on my own a lot, but she was always there, chatting to me. It was a child's voice, but very wise. We shared the good times – and she helped me through the bad.

At home in west London, our family life was chaotic. Mum believed in spells and charms, and often gave tarot readings. Unfortunately, her psychic skills didn't help her to see the evil that lurked nearby...

Our neighbour, Duncan*, who I called Uncle, often babysat for me if Mum and Dad had to go out and my older brother Nicholas was at school. Uncle Duncan would often play his special game of 'horsey', bouncing me up and down on his lap, faster and faster.

"We won't tell your mum or Aunty Flo*. It's our little secret isn't it, Michele?" he'd say. I nodded – at three-years old I didn't understand.

Other times, he'd do 'Scottish dancing' and ask me to find out what was under his kilt. Or yank off my underwear and sit me on top of his belly, grunting as he muttered a nursery rhyme. It was horrible.

The games with Duncan became part of my life for



*NAME CHANGED TO PROTECT IDENTITIES. PHOTOS: BRIAN RITCHIE



Far left: Michele's mum and dad; Left: Michele with her dad, who died of cancer when she was just six; Below: Michele survived the bad times, with help from her twin Lucy, and now lives an idyllic life in the countryside with her son, Julian, 22



'Lucy and I shared the good times - and she helped me through the bad'

the next few years. I became withdrawn and frightened. It was during these times that I felt Lucy around me, talking to me and reassuring me. Sometimes it felt that she took my place when bad things were happening, so I could blank out the worst bits. She'd gently push me aside and I'd go into a blissful darkness while she faced the horrors instead of me.

When I was six, Dad died of bone cancer. He'd been ill for a while. We moved house and I prayed that life would get better.

Five years later, Mum remarried a man called Dennis*. The marriage was pretty stormy and they were always yelling at each other.

One day, after a terrible row, she picked up an ashtray and threw it at him, knocking out one of his teeth. Dennis was mad with rage.

"This is bad," I heard Lucy say. Nicholas crept up beside me as we watched Dennis walk to the shed and return with an axe.

As we ran to hide, we heard the house being smashed up and my terrified mother screaming.

Desperate to get to her, I rammed the living-room door with all my might. Crashing through, I saw Dennis with a demented look in his eyes. I was sure he was going to kill me.

Suddenly, time seemed to judder to a halt. I felt this strange feeling wash over me, as if someone were wrapping me in a warm rug.

"Don't worry. You can do it. I'll help you," said Lucy. Her voice sounded loud and clear in my head. In that moment,

I knew it would all be OK. For a few seconds, Dennis was totally mesmerised, held by my eyes. It was just long enough for my mother to escape. Together, we managed to lock the door.

The police arrived and took Dennis away and he was sent to prison for a few months. Unfortunately, though, family life didn't get much better.

It was around this time, on holiday, that I found out about Lucy.

Mum's third husband, Russell*, was also violent and unstable. Mum was suffering and often arguments would flare up between us.

Once, when I was 15, she threatened to stab me. I adored my mother, but looking back, she must have had some kind of breakdown.

"I'm going to kill you," she screamed as she stormed out of the kitchen one evening with a large kitchen knife in her hand. I knew I'd have seconds to race up to my bedroom and lock myself in.

My bedroom door was slashed nearly to ribbons. The police were called and I was put into a children's home for my safety, although Mum was never charged.

I hated it there and felt miserable and lonely without my family around me. So, when I found a bottle of pills in the bathroom cabinet, it seemed like the answer.

"What's the point of going on?" I thought. I shut the door and swallowed the whole packet before Lucy could say a word.

Suddenly, I felt Lucy's presence. "You need to get help," she

screamed. "You have a great future ahead of you. You'll be happy and help people, and live in the country. Don't give up now!"

Finally, I unsteadily headed to the staff room. I was rushed to hospital, where doctors gave me a foul-tasting liquid to make me sick.

"You're a very lucky girl," the doctor said. "You could have died."

I knew Lucy had saved my life.

Soon after, Lucy left me. "It's time for me to go," she said. It was sad, but I knew I'd always be protected.

Lucy was right. My life did start to turn around. At 16, I started using my psychic gift, and by 21 I had a shop in Covent Garden, London, where I ran workshops and gave healings and readings.

When I was pregnant with my son Julian, now 22, I told Mum about the abuse. She found it hard to come to terms with and took an overdose but, thankfully, survived. Years later, we made our peace when Mum was dying of emphysema.

I now live in the West Country and have everything I could want.

I always wondered if I'd hear from Lucy again, but I never have. It's like she spoke to me when I was young and needed protecting. I can still feel her presence, but she doesn't speak to me. They say that twins have a special bond and my experience proves that.

As told to Pam Francis



■ Touched By Evil, (Hodder & Stoughton). Michele's full story is on sale 1 May, £12.99