

brain haemorrhage. But the experience has left her unafraid of death



I felt myself drawn out of my body. It was the instant I knew I had 'died'

'I thought, why am I no longer in pain? No longer frightened?'

The pain pounded relentlessly in my head. This was accompanied by waves of hot and cold sweats surging throughout my body while my stomach churned with nausea. What happened next was totally unforeseen and completely out of my control. All I could do was surrender to the experience.

Whooooooosh... I suddenly found myself drawn out of my body... I felt amazing! Floating, weightless... What was this sense of freedom, this boundless freedom?

Then I glimpsed a light, a shimmering light, as if peering through the haze of a scorching day. The brilliant light refracted everywhere into tiny glistening sparks of ignited energy – beautiful, bright, breathtaking.

Pulled by this light, I let go. I surrendered as a profound peace

and gentle exuberance began to radiate throughout my whole being. Suddenly it dawned on me that the agonising pain had vanished. I thought: 'Why am I no longer feeling the pounding pain from the haemorrhage? Why am I no longer frightened? I'm not at all fearful or anxious.'

I felt totally free... I stayed there, dwelling in this vibration, I have no idea for how long. There was no sense of linear time or spatial limitations as I was beyond the physical realm. In this limitless expanse of oneness I was fully aware that I was experiencing the Source from which we all originate. I felt a profound sense of belonging and a deep knowing that this is our core truth. We are pure energy, pure love.

From the moment I entered this higher realm I surrendered to and trusted the entire experience. As

the journey progressed, I came to realise that I am, as everyone is, part of an infinite universe, so immense in scale that we could never fully comprehend its size within the constraints of our limited minds.

I understood that life is truly everlasting, it is an unending stream of consciousness. We continue to exist after our life-force leaves our bodies. Our true essence is eternal. I was aware that if it was my time to 'die' I would willingly choose to go. Indeed, the bliss I experienced of the ecstatic love was so enticing... so incredibly entrancing... that I found it extremely difficult to make the decision to come back.

If my parents had not been alive at the time, I would have chosen to stay in the infinite, I would not have come back.

notes and medication. I was on painkillers but the percentage was so tiny – they want to keep you as conscious as possible – they wouldn't cause hallucinations.

'It was more real than anything I have ever experienced'

'I was on painkillers, but if you have hallucinations from drugs, they tend to be very different. You don't get a sense of unity, it doesn't change who you are. I asked that

question, and what I experienced couldn't have been caused by drugs.

'I was in and out of it throughout that whole night and even the following day.

'Bruce said it's very common, with post near death experiences: you have such a huge awakening of your consciousness, there is no such thing as death. It changes your whole perspective and it's very overwhelming. They help you to understand what happened. I was gone, I didn't have the experience of looking down at my body.'

Both of Róisín's parents died in 2010, and she said her experience in the intensive care unit in 2004 helped her to cope with her death.

'I have no fear at all now. I was able to be there for them. They give you everything and there is so little I can do for them, I don't have kids, so I could give them something back.'

'My mother had a beautiful passing. Mum said, "The angels are coming for me a half hour before I die" – and what I experi-

enced in her room as she was passing, it was pure love, a shared death experience. I became an artist of the light because I couldn't express what happened in words, but now I can and now was the right time.

'I don't know if it's God, some people would say it is, for me it was pure love and energy.'

Each and every one of us has access to this incredible love light. I am an ordinary person and no one special, but what happened was extraordinary and I know there are people out there who understand.'

■ *Taking Heaven Lightly* by Róisín Fitzpatrick is published by Hachette Books Ireland



Artist Róisín Fitzpatrick was just 35 when she was struck down by a

RÓISÍN Fitzpatrick had been salsa dancing just two nights before, celebrating her 35th birthday with a group of friends into the wee hours of the morning.

She didn't drink or smoke; she was young, fit and healthy. Yet here she was in the comfort of her own home, struck down by devastating head pain, unable to properly manage her body – and desperately aware that she was suffering a brain haemorrhage.

Soon she was in the hospital, transported by ambulance, feeling her strength and consciousness ebb away. Struggling to survive, she lay in the intensive



by Alison O'Reilly

care unit, one of just six patients. And then something extraordinary happened.

Róisín felt herself hovering over her own body, drawn towards a 'beautiful light' that was calling her towards it.

It was the moment she realised she had died.

Pulled by the light, she let go and surrendered to what she describes as a profound peace – at the very moment that her

agonising pain vanished. But as her parents were stunned by the possibility of losing their youngest daughter, Róisín realised it wasn't her time to leave this world and returned.

'I had felt totally free,' she told the Irish Mail on Sunday. 'I continued to relinquish all resistance, I allowed this crystalline light to permeate through me and to surround me.'

'With full 360 degree panoramic vision, I was able to see all around me. Everywhere I looked I was encircled by flickering iridescent lights. They reminded me of fireflies. This light seemed to blaze into eternity.'

'I felt pure love and my think-

ing was so lucid. But I couldn't leave because it would be too challenging for my parents. They have given me everything. It was my mother's biggest fear that she would lose me before they passed.'

'So I came back into my body, into the ICU and into my physical body. I knew I had to go back, and once I made that decision I was back in my body.'

The extraordinary experience happened in 2004 after the graduate of Trinity College and the University of Geneva had left her high-ranking job as an expert in privatisation in the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to work in homeopathy.

'I was so young and fit, I never smoked and didn't drink, I practised yoga and ate very well. Death was just not on my radar,' she said.

The day before her brain haemorrhage, Róisín had decided to become a channel for the light and to open her mind more through yoga and meditation. She believes the decision inadvertently led to her catastrophic injuries.

'I literally set the intention,' she said. 'I realised there was a bigger perspective on life, it's the classic dark night of the soul. I wanted to embrace it more and more. I was meditating the day before and I wanted to be able to share something beautiful in this world, so the next day I had a brain haemorrhage.'

Róisín is now an 'artist of the light' and is currently on her eleventh exhibition, which has brought her all over the US.

She has also written her first book about her near death experience.

Taking Heaven Lightly describes the shocking journey Róisín encountered after turning her back on a high-powered job in Brussels.

'This can sound so surreal and very strange,' she explained. 'If you tried to talk about this "love and light" lark to me when I was in banking, I would have been right up at the top of the sceptical queue. I wouldn't have got it, but having experienced it, this was more real than anything I have ever experienced.'

'Some people might call it God or universal wisdom. It's so incredibly

'There was a hushed serene silence. My thinking was lucid'

immense and powerful and vast.'

She says that she believes in the afterlife now.

Born in Howth, in north Co. Dublin, Róisín was the fourth child of Thomas and Mary Fitzpatrick, of the Fitzpatrick Shoes dynasty. She graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, and the University of Geneva, studying international relations. She worked with the European Commission and the United Nations, as well as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

In the early Nineties, Róisín says she suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome and was all but bedridden for two years before she discovered homeopathy and nursed herself back to health.

'I trained in homeopathy and began eating properly, sleeping and taking care of myself. I turned to art and began to focus on the light and I wanted to be an artist for the light,' she said.

And light is a striking feature of her Victorian home on the seafront of Bray, Co. Wicklow. Róisín bought the property 12 years ago, refurbishing it to reflect her artistic and philosophical sensibilities. Róisín restored the original floorboards to their current honey colour, and the stairs have a rich red carpet, giving it an instant welcoming feel.

'I wanted to bring the theme of the sea into the house, and the large mirrors are Victorian, they help bring in the light and to be at one with nature,' she said.

Her curtains are turquoise and sea green.

In front a roaring fire, berry crumble has been laid out on a coffee table decorated with sand and shells from the sea; the petite artist, wearing an elegant blue dress with black high heel shoes, offers me herbal tea.

'I don't drink tea or coffee,' she said. 'I swim in the sea every day in the summer, and walk the full length of

'If my parents had not been alive, I would not have come back'

the promenade every morning.'

She prefers to call her near death experience a 'near life experience'.

'I talked about my experience so many times at my exhibitions in the US that people began telling me to write about it. I said, no way, people would think I was a lunatic, but the more I spoke about it the more people wanted to share their own experiences.'

'At first I couldn't write it down, but when it flowed, it really flowed.'

Recounting the experience of her illness, she said: 'I remember that day like it was yesterday, it was the Monday after the weekend I had gone dancing with my friends for my birthday.'

'I was home alone, I had just turned 35; I had been out salsa dancing on the Saturday night, into the wee hours of the morning, a wonderful time. On the Monday I had the day off. I was in my bedroom. I stood up and turned my head, suddenly I had a blinding headache, my head was wrenched backwards in a spasm and I got hot and cold sweats. I knew it was a really dangerous situation, so I called the ambulance. I felt nauseous, and I vomited. Although I had rang the ambulance, I knew I could lose consciousness, so I clung to the banisters and got to the front door to open it. I was on my knees by the time the ambulance arrived.'

'I was taken into St Colmcille's Hospital [in south Co. Dublin]. They did a CT scan, then they brought me into intensive care in Beaumont.'

'I was terrified. I was facing dying, potentially. It was like standing at the edge of an abyss, that's where I was, I had to surrender to that. What happened next was truly amazing, I realised each and every one of us are so powerful, we are our deepest truth, it is the pure love. I came out of my body, I saw a beautiful radiant light. This was not the lights in the ICU. I felt embraced by love, it was pure and unconditional, like nothing I experience in my life.'

'There was a hushed serene silence. It was peaceful; my thinking was more lucid, I thought, "Who am I?" I wasn't in my body. "What is this, where am I?" I realised that this is actually what it is all about. That light changed and became waves of energy, it's like when you're flying on a plane and when you see the skyline and it's the beautiful tangerine clouds, they extend on and on and on and I was part of it, it was vibrant and alive. I was brought to the place that was pure energy, this is the fields of pure potential.'

'I was very conscious and I was not out of it on drugs.'

Róisín has since worked with Dr Bruce Greyson, an expert in the field of near death experiences.

'Bruce has spent 40 years studying near death experience, he contacted me through a mutual acquaintance when he heard about my work.'

'I've done my own research into what happens when you have a brain haemorrhage, and he looked at my medical

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