

My Guardian Angel

Daniel, don't forget to wear your helmet!" Jo Ann Hartmann called as her 13-year-old son wheeled his motorized scooter into the yard of their Tucson home.

"Aww, Mom," the seventh-grader groaned. "Nothing will happen!"

Uh-oh, here we go again, the 40-year-old mom thought with a smile.

Adolescent rebelliousness was nothing new to Jo Ann, now seven months pregnant with her fifth child. She'd gone through it before with her two older sons, Max, 17, and Alex, 14, and compromise had helped settle the conflicts.

But where safety was concerned, Jo Ann was firm. "No helmet, no scooter—remember?" she said, reminding Daniel of the promise he'd made when he'd bought the scooter.

"Okay," Daniel sighed. And after putting on the helmet, he blew Jo

Struck by a huge truck and suffering from a severe brain injury, doctors had little hope 13-year-old Daniel Drachman would survive, much less recover. But a Heavenly dream and a message from angels sent Daniel back—to a full recovery in the arms of his loving family!



"My angels are still all around me"

Ann a kiss and zoomed off.

But once out of view, Daniel stopped and removed the helmet. Mom worries too much! he thought. Plus, helmets don't look cool.

Turning onto a busy highway, Daniel tooted along the dirt shoulder, his mind filled with thoughts of an upcoming math exam.

Then suddenly, his front wheel clipped a jutting segment of broken pavement. "No!" Daniel screamed as he catapulted over the handlebars, hurtled through the air, then slammed into the pavement.

Please, God, he still has his whole life ahead of him, she prayed at his bedside

Lying stunned in the middle of the road, he heard the screech of brakes. Turning his head, he gasped: an 18-wheel truck was barreling toward him at 50 mph!

It's going to hit me! Daniel thought, scrambling to his feet.

But it was too late. As the truck bore down on him, everything went black. Daniel's body flew through the air and over a car before landing in some brush on the opposite side of the highway, 50 feet from where he'd been struck.

Moments later, a sheriff's deputy

arrived at Jo Ann's door. "Daniel's been in an accident," he said.

"Dear God!" Jo Ann gasped. After calling her ex-husband, Roy Drachman—Daniel's dad—and her husband, Todd, she told Max to watch Alex and three-year-old Tyler, then rushed to the hospital. Moments later, as Roy and Todd rushed in, doctors were delivering the grim news. "Your son's in bad shape," they said, and Jo Ann grew weak.

"How... how bad?" she managed. Daniel had suffered a broken pelvis and collarbone—and he had a brain injury that was causing seizures. "He's in a coma," doctors said. "And if he survives, he could be brain damaged."

Numb with grief, Jo Ann and Todd went to the ICU. "My poor baby!" she wept at the sight of Daniel lost in a sea of tubes and wires. His head was the size of a basketball and his eyes were swollen shut. A respirator helped him breathe.

"Mom's here," Jo Ann whispered, taking his hand. "You'll be okay."

Meanwhile, word of the accident had spread, and soon, over 50 friends had gathered at the hospital to offer support. But doctors weren't hopeful. "He may not make it through the night," they warned.

Please God, he still has his whole

life ahead of him! Jo Ann prayed.

Against the odds, Daniel survived that first night, the second

... and on the third day, his eyes opened. "He's awake!" Jo Ann told Todd. "Honey, do you know who's here?" she whispered.

"Yeah," Daniel replied, glancing at Todd. "But where's Mom?"

The words cut Jo Ann's heart like a knife. He doesn't remember me! she wept. "Honey, I'm Mommy," she said.

But Daniel had slipped away again... yet this time it wasn't the darkness of sleep that enveloped him. He was riding high up in the sky, sailing through white, billowy clouds on his new scooter. Looking down, he marveled at the crystal blue sky beneath his feet.

Am I in Heaven? he wondered. Then out of nowhere, four or five images shimmered into view.

Angels! Daniel thought. They had big, fluffy wings, and their faces

"It wasn't Daniel's time," says Jo Ann. "He has a purpose in life."

were the picture of serenity. As they smiled at him, a radiant warmth washed over Daniel's body, and he felt safe. And he knew with a clarity beyond anything he'd ever felt before that he was going to be okay.

Now the angels were talking, but he couldn't hear what they were saying. Daniel drew closer and slowly, the words became clear: "It's not your time yet, you can go back."

And that was the last thing he remembered. When Daniel opened his eyes again, the angels were gone. "Mom?" he murmured.

He's awake! Jo Ann thought, her heart leaping. "I'm right here," she whispered, squeezing his hand.

"I love you, Mom," he said.

Later, Jo Ann got goosebumps as Daniel described his dream. "I knew I had to come back," he said.

Lord, thank You for sending guardian angels to bring our son back! she prayed, tears in her eyes.

And from then on, Daniel's recovery was miraculous. By the end of the day, he could walk across the room by himself. In a couple of days, his memory had returned.

A week after the accident, Daniel walked out of the hospital. "He's a miracle!" doctors told Jo Ann.

After two months of physical therapy, doctors announced that Daniel had made a full recovery. And the day after his final therapy session, Daniel and his family celebrated the birth of his little sister, Alyssa!

Today, Daniel is back in school,

A week later, he walked out of the hospital. "He's a miracle!" doctors said

and plays with Tyler and his baby sister when he's not studying. "He's a lot happier since the accident," Jo Ann says. "He laughs a lot more."

She's convinced angels touched him that day. "I believe it was those Heavenly beings who brought us a miracle," she says.

And Daniel says he wants to paint his bedroom bright blue, with clouds on the ceiling, just like the sky in his dream. "To remind myself," he explains, "that my angels are still all around me."

—Christian Fisher

Are "near-death" experiences real?

Millions of Americans say they've had an experience in which they "meet" angels, says Diane Corcoran, Ph.D., R.N., who researches near-death experiences (NDEs).

Many doctors say NDEs are caused by disturbances—like a seizure—in the parts of the brain that control our emotions.



But Corcoran points out that people's experiences are eerily similar: the person "leaves" her body, encounters a light, then sees spiritual beings who tell her: "It's not your time. Go back." "People are changed by these experiences—they love life more," says Corcoran. "How can you explain away such a phenomenon?"

Have you had an encounter with someone truly special, an angel who changed your life? Please send the details along with your name, address and phone number to: My Guardian Angel, Woman's World, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. If we print your story, we'll pay you \$250. Submissions may be edited for style.