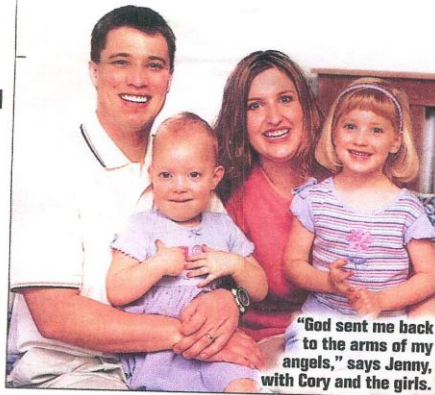


Miracles happen!

Jenny Reese's car had smashed through a guardrail and was plummeting 70 feet, bouncing like a tin can along the hillside. Yet suddenly, a feeling of peace washed over Jenny, and she knew she would be all right. And incredibly, despite a broken neck that doctors said should have killed her or left her a quadriplegic, she was



"God sent me back to the arms of my angels," says Jenny, with Cory and the girls.

In the arms of an angel

Good, he's got my results, Jenny Reese sighed as the doctor hurried into the ER, clutching her X-rays. After the day she'd had, all Jenny wanted to do was go home and hug her little girls.

"So . . ." she began, starting to rise. But halfway to standing . . . "Don't move a muscle!" the doctor blurted. "The slightest movement could leave you paralyzed!" Incredibly, though Jenny had walked into the hospital on her own two feet, her neck was broken, her spine splintered in two.

Jenny stared at him in disbelief. That's impossible! she gasped. Just hours earlier, Jenny was enjoying the summer day . . . "Are you really awake?" her hus-

Suddenly, a powerful feeling overwhelmed her. She felt no fear, no panic

band, Cory, had teased into the phone at 5 a.m. A Great Falls, Montana, police officer, he had another hour before his shift ended. But Jenny would be gone by then.

A women's crisis counselor, the 23-year-old was due at an early-morning conference three hours away in Billings. Jenny hated leaving before 2 1/2-year-old Sayde and eight-month-old Hannah were up. But they'll have fun with Grandma, she knew.

And by 5:30 a.m., Jenny was on the road. I should get up this early every morning, she sighed as dawn brushed streaks of pink, blue and orange across the sky.

Beautiful, Jenny breathed. And so is this song, she smiled, turning up the radio and singing along to

Sarah McLachlan's "In the Arms of an Angel." But a second later . . .

"Watch out!" Jenny screamed as a deer darted onto the bridge in front of her. She swerved, sparing the deer, but . . .

"No!" she shrieked as her car rammied into the guardrail and sailed off the side of the bridge, bouncing against the hillside as it tumbled down the embankment. "God, help me!" Jenny cried, closing her eyes. Then suddenly, a powerful feeling overwhelmed her, a serenity that blanketed her in comfort. She felt no fear. No panic.

Fifty, 60, more than 70 feet down . . . her car spiraled wildly. Yet Jenny felt as if she were gliding through the air. "You're in the arms of an angel . . ." Eerily, the lyrics wafted from the radio. And as if she were indeed wrapped in loving arms, Jenny felt protected. Then, just as her car smacked head-first into a ravine, Jenny could have sworn someone whispered, "You'll be okay."

The impact was fierce. The engine was catapulted from under the hood; shards of glass flew. But I'm okay, Jenny swallowed. Crawling out the driver's side door, she gasped at the sight of her car. The front end was crushed. The rear had folded into the backseat. But . . .

Her seat and the roof above it were intact. It's like I was in a bubble! Jenny thought in awe.

Then she saw smoke billowing from the wreckage—and realized she had to get away. Looking up toward the highway, she winced, feeling a pinch. But with no help in sight, she began clawing up the embankment, then climbed through barbed wire onto the highway.

Just then, a truck pulled up, and three men jumped out. They called 911, then Cory, who was at the

hospital when Jenny arrived.

"I'm okay," she cried. And aside from some aches and a cut on her head, Jenny believed she was.

But now, after X-rays . . . "Stay absolutely still," orthopedic surgeon Dr. Mike Dube warned. "Your spine has been severed!" "How can that be?" Jenny stammered. "My neck doesn't even hurt that much!"

The doctor put her X-rays on the light box. "Look," he said. Jenny and Cory gasped. Jenny's spine had snapped into two pieces near her neck!

"You should be paralyzed from the neck down," Dr. Dube said. And even though it hadn't happened yet, "With this type of injury, a sneeze, a hiccup could be all it takes."

Jenny's heart thundered. "Can you fix it?" Cory choked. "We'll do surgery," Dr. Dube said. "But I'm afraid the damage is so severe, there's a 50-50 chance you'll wake up a quadriplegic," he said.

Terror washed over Jenny. How will I take care of my babies? she wept. Born with cerebral palsy, Hannah needed her. And sweet Sayde, she thought. How could I never hold her again? Please, God, help me! Jenny prayed as she was prepped for surgery.

Because of her fragile condition, it took 90 minutes just to get her onto the operating table. Then, Dr. Dube took a piece of bone from

Jenny's hip and fused it into her neck, reconnecting her spinal cord. Carefully, he worked for four hours—and afterward, to keep Jenny from injuring her new repaired spine, she was kept sedated for three days. Then . . .

"Can you move your toes?" Jenny heard her mother's voice.

Why are you asking me that? sleepy Jenny wondered as she came awake. Of course, I can, she thought, wiggling all 10. And her eyes opened, Jenny saw her mother's smile . . . Cory's tears. "Oh, God, I can move my toes!" she cried as the accident surgery came flooding back.

But would she be able to walk? "There was a lot of muscle damage around the spine. Only time will tell," Dr. Dube cautioned.

After a week in the hospital, Jenny went home to begin physical therapy. And with the help of Cory and her mom—and the love of the little girls—Jenny vowed, I will come back.

And amazingly, in just two months, she was walking unaided, caring for her girls on her own!

And as her eyes slowly opened, Jenny saw her mother . . . smiling

Dr. Dube shook his head. "With an injury like yours, you shouldn't be walking or even breathing on your own." Yet, after just four months, Jenny was strong enough to return to work!

At last, she was anxious about getting behind the wheel of a car but she refused to give in. And one day, she drove to the site of the accident. She expected to feel unnerved, but as she looked down from the bridge, all she saw was a beautiful creek shimmering with sunlight. Tranquility washed over her—just like the calm that enveloped her that fateful day.

Today, two years after the accident, Jenny returns to that spot often. "A miracle happened there," she insists. "There's no other explanation. I truly was in the arms of an angel."

—Shari Cohen

Four tricks to conquer your fears



After her car accident, Jenny was afraid to drive again. Everyone experiences fear at times, but, like Jenny, we can overcome it, says Jerilyn Ross, M.A., L.I.C.S.W., author of *Triumph Over Fear*. She offers these tips:

1. **Admit you're afraid.** Even say it out loud.
2. **Talk yourself through it.** Repeat in your head, "I can do this."
3. **Share your feelings.** A pep talk from a loved one can do wonders for your self-confidence.
4. **Do something to relax.** Jenny found music calming. Yoga and deep breathing can also help.