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Levi Sanders

Brock Buller

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A Life That Isn't Mine

By Levi Sanders and Brock Buller

Have you ever heard the expression "My life flashed before my eyes"? People use it so much it's become a cliché. But such a thing happened to me, although it wasn't my life I saw.

It was a bright Monday morning when it started. Being the intern in the office, I had to be the runner for the morning coffee. As I patiently waited for the crosswalk on Biscayne Avenue, I noticed beside me what looked to be a homeless man. He smelled of body odor and garbage. I felt repulsed just standing by him.

"Beautiful day isn't it?" he asked me. He smiled warmly and appeared friendly. I tried to be polite and answered him with a nod.

The walking light turned, bringing a sigh of relief from me. As I started to walk towards the coffee shop across the street, I heard the sound of the homeless man. He was screaming, "Watch out!" and he shoved me away from a car that was running the red light. In the process of his shoving me, I tripped and fell. My head hit the curb, and that was the last thing I remember before waking up in Memorial Hospital.

When I open my eyes, I see balloons and flowers with signs that say *Get Well Soon!* and *You're in Our Thoughts!* I am the only person in

the room, the beeping sounds of machines blaring in my ears. I fling the covers off me and sit up. As my head it seems time still, and I'm transported somewhere else. I see a woman in a hospital bed holding a baby boy. She looks down and says to the baby, "I love you."

Within a second, I am back in my room. I feel my hands and they are sweaty. *That must have been a dream*, I tell myself. But, it felt so real. I rip the cords that are connected to my chest and fingers, and I go into the hallway. I see no one except my mom. When she sees me walk towards her, she cries, shouts with joy, and hugs me. I ask her where Dad is - my adoptive dad - and she says he is coming from New York and will be here as soon as possible.

I love my adoptive dad with all my heart, because he treats me like his own child. My biological dad ran out on me and my mom when I was three months old. Mom said he told her that he didn't love her anymore and he was going to find someone who appreciated him for who he is. I have hated my dad for as long as I can remember, and I don't think I could ever forgive him for what he did. My mom ushers me to my room and sits in the chair. I asked her what happened and she told me: some homeless man shoved me



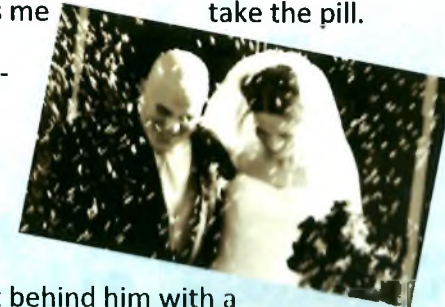
away from a car and he saved my life. The man took my phone from my pocket and called the contact named "Mom" and explained what happened. 911 was called and everything else fell into place except no one could find the man that helped me.

Around dinner time, Dad walks in and gives me a hug and tells me I was going to be all right. Then right before my eyes, I see another vision. This time, I see a boy and girl in an old, beat-up pickup truck. The boy looks slightly like me, and the girl looks like my mom. *What is this?* I ask myself. I see them kiss and the vision fades away.

My heart is beating super-fast, and I'm sweating bullets. My parents look alarmed and get a nurse. The nurse comes in with a wet cloth, a glass of water, and a pill. She puts the cloth on my head and makes me take the pill.

On Wednesday, I am released. Dad comes in my room, and he has a wheelchair. My

mom comes in right behind him with a suitcase of the clothes I was wearing when I came to the hospital. I get in the wheelchair, and Dad takes me to the elevator and down to the car. When I get inside the car, I get another vision. This time, I am taken outside a church. There are cars parked everywhere, and I see people running out of the church, first a bride with the groom on



her arm and then people throwing rice at the newlyweds. I get a closer look at the newlyweds, and I see it's the boy and girl I saw in my last vision.

I snap back to reality, puzzled by why this is happening to me. The ride back home is a blur. I get to my parents' house and go to the kitchen. I see a week's worth of newspapers neatly stacked on the dinner table. Mom walks in and tells me that Dad put them there because he knew I liked to read them. I find the earliest newspaper: Monday. I skim through most of the boring old news and I come upon the obituaries. There are the usual types of people dead: 80 year old men and women who had a heart attack or stroke. Then, I notice one picture of someone I had seen before: the homeless man. Under his picture, "*Died Sunday*" is written. I am struck with surprise and I get another vision. This time, we are in my parents' house, and I see my mother holding a little baby. She's yelling at the homeless man that saved me.

"I'm sorry, Adam! He loves me in a way you can't!" she yells, crying.

He yells back, "*We had a child, Susan!*" He points to the child she is holding. "*You had an affair while you were pregnant with my child.*"

About this time, the front door opens and my adoptive father walks in. Adam looks at him and then at my mom. He picks up a suitcase and tells her, "*I'm leaving. I don't love you anymore, Susan,*

and I'm going to find someone who appreciates me for who I am."

With that, he walks around my adoptive dad and slams the door shut. I am taken back to reality with what just happened.

The homeless man is my real dad.

I think back to all the visions I've had, and they all center on my biological dad. I am appalled. It felt like I had been hit with a sack full of bricks. I look around and don't see anyone. I look to see what funeral home my real dad is in, and I decide to go there and pay my respects.

I don't tell my cheating mom or deceiving adoptive dad I'm leaving. I take their car and drive to the funeral home. I get there and ask the funeral director where he is, and he points me to a room at the end of a long hall. He looks at me and says, "You got here in time. In an hour, we're going to cremate him."

I go into the room they are holding him in, and I see they have him in just a cardboard box. There is another man in the room viewing the body. It is a man dressed in the same homeless clothing style I saw him in on Monday. He looks at me and says, "You look like him." He shakes my hand and continues, "He said you would come. He told me to give this to you." He

hands me an envelope.

I look at the front and in delicate handwriting it says "*My Child.*" I open it and there is a letter written in the same handwriting. It says:

"My Child,

If you are reading this, that means my plan worked. I am sorry I never got the chance to get to know you. I didn't want to leave, but I had to. I hope the visions of my life I've sent you explain my situation. Just know that from now on, I will be with you wherever you go. I love you.

Love Always,

Your Father



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A tear starts to roll down my cheek, but I have a smile on my face. He might have died Sunday, but on Monday, he lived in me. Even after he died, he made it clear that he wanted to make amends.

I turn the paper over, grab a pen from the guestbook table, and write the words "*I forgive you. I love you, too.*" I place the note in his dead hands, turn and walk out of the funeral home.