"Dad, I need to go to Hailey's to borrow a shirt for school tomorrow," I shouted from the back room. It had been a hard week for me. My cheerleading squad was preparing for a performance, and we had been practicing before and after school. While I waited for an answer from my dad, the game show, "Who Wants to be a Millionaire," sounded in the background. "Dad, I am going to run to Hailey's real quick," I repeated my shout.

A reply came: "It's snowing pretty hard, wait for my show to end and I will take you. I am on my way to the store anyway." I looked out the window to see snow coming down pretty heavy. On any other day, I would have argued to leave right away, but for some reason I didn't argue. Ten or fifteen minutes later, however, I decided I really needed to go.

I said, "Mom just take me, I have a lot of stuff to do tonight." My mom said she didn't want to drive on the bad roads. "Wait for your dad," she told me. So I waited.

Finally, the show ended and we were on our way out the door. The roads were slippery and the snow was coming down hard. I looked out the windows of the car and in my mind, I heard my mom reminding me to slide the seat away from the dashboard. I chuckled to myself that a seventeen-year old would be too small to sit with an airbag, but I was. As I slid the seat back, my dad asked, "Cara is your seat belt on?" I fastened my seat belt and stared at the snow. It was a peaceful night; it felt quiet and serene. It felt good to have a few minutes of alone time with my dad. We were lost in conversation, and before I knew it we were in front of Hailey's house. I ran in and waved goodbye to my dad. I found the shirt I wanted, and played a game with Hailey and her sisters while we waited for my dad. We joked about my mismatching outfit that consisted of doctor scrubs, a football sweatshirt, and snow boots. While we were laughing, I noticed the headlights in the driveway and hurried out.

I excitedly explained the game we had played to my dad as we drove away from Hailey's house. We turned onto a dark road surrounded by fields. The road passed over the interstate and is a bridge over the speeding cars. I continued to talk rapidly with my dad as we began the incline to the peak of the bridge. I looked out of the windshield, and saw a bright flash. An inexplicable feeling consumed me. It was a feeling of panic and eerie calm. I somehow understood that everything was out of my hands. I vaguely remember pushing towards that back of my seat trying desperately to get away from the flash. Then my world went black.

I slowly regained consciousness and struggled to make sense of the chaos I felt. When I couldn't make my body do what I wanted the terror set in. My eyes were open, but I couldn't see. Every emotion in my body soared and panic consumed me. "I am paralyzed," was my first thought, and then almost immediately my thoughts turned to my dad. I was trying desperately to ask him if he was okay, but I was only making unintelligible noises. I couldn't look at him, but could hear him wheezing and moaning. "Daddy, daddy," I cried. No answer. As I waited for something to happen, my disordered cries changed to, "Heavenly Father, Heavenly Father."

I felt alone and panicked when I heard a faint call, "Where are we?"

A subtle feeling of peace came over me and I replied, "We got in an accident"
"Oh yes," my dad said, "There was nothing I could do." He seemed to be asking me to understand that he did all that was in his power to prevent this, but it wasn't enough. I could sense the pain in his voice that he had been unable to prevent this from happening to me, his little girl.

"I know," came my reply. I still wasn't able to turn my head to see my dad, but I reached out and found his hand. "Dad," I said, "I am going to say a prayer." I prayed for our health, for an element of calmness, and for the people in the other car. As I finished my prayer, I was able to turn and look at my dad. He was pinned between the seat and the steering wheel, and his head was sticking out the driver's side window.

"I'm stuck," he said. The vulnerability and helplessness of my dad struck me hard. He really wasn't made of steel; my dad, my strength, was not unbreakable. The realization that the bigger responsibility to remain strong was on my shoulders scared me, yet sustained me. A strength I didn't know I was able to possess filled my body. It was my turn to quit sobbing and support my dad. Without consent from either of us, our roles switched.

Eventually, the scene around me began to come into focus. I saw a big white bag in front of me, and felt slimy cold. I noticed the shattered windshield, the distorted car frame, and the lack of dashboard and radio. Just then, someone came to the window and asked if we were okay. I simply said, "My dad is stuck, call the paramedics." The man left, and the silence set in. It was completely dark around us, and besides our own voices I couldn't hear anyone or anything. I continually regained more and more mobility and looked around for the other car. It was nowhere to be seen.

Meanwhile, back in my warm house, my mom knew something had happened to us. We were taking too long, and she had a bad feeling. She called to find out where we were, and Hailey assured her we had just left and would be home shortly. Hailey's assurance didn't appease my mom, and she sat by the phone praying it wouldn't ring. She sat there alone for almost two hours waiting for that unwelcome phone call.

"I am really sorry my hair is so frizzy," I continued to explain to the paramedics that I had just showered before the accident, and that I didn't usually look so unkempt. I apologized for the outfit I was wearing and for my makeup less face. In retrospect, the things I said and the way I acted while in shock brings a grin to my face. It is bizarre how your perspective changes when you are in a traumatic situation. The sound of ambulances, which usually makes me cringe, had seemed so redeeming. The paramedics continued working faithfully to remove us from the twisted pieces of metal that had resembled a car only a few minutes before. While waiting, I saw my friend walk to one of the ambulances. In what felt like a chaotic dream, reality hit once more. It was then I realized the other car contained real people; people I knew. "This may be loud, so plug your ears," on paramedic told me as he handed me a blanket before starting the Jaws of Life to extract my dad from the car. As they gently pulled me through the back door, I saw my dad on a stretcher and tried desperately to understand the seriousness of the situation. I fought to make myself believe what was happening. My heart told me to believe and cope, but my mind told me to simply ignore the reality.

At the hospital, they put me on a bed in an empty room and went to work on my dad. As I sat in silence once again, the calmness slowly slipped away. Just when I thought I was going to lose it, my mom walked in. She looked at me and cried, "You shouldn't be here." As I looked at my mom, the responsibility of being strong seemed to lift from my shoulders. I collapsed back onto the bed and the tears fell freely. My mask was gone, and I allowed myself to be weak. Moments later, my uncle and my bishop walked through the door. The timing couldn't have been more ideal. They laid their hands upon my head and blessed me. The blessing I received was incredible, and the spirit that was present is inexplicable. My testimony of divine intervention and of each of our individual missions on this earth was unbelievably strengthened. A new stronger calmness enveloped me, and a different responsibility fell on my shoulders. For the first time, in my life, I felt of my personal importance to my Father in Heaven, and the role I was to play in His kingdom.

Finally, we received the results from our examinations. Because of the nature of the accident my dad and I should not be here today, but we are! My dad had broken his nose, his ribs, both of his ankles, and had severely...
damaged his knees. I had torn ligaments and muscles in my left hip, knee, and back. I had cracked a vertebrate in my lower back, and received stitches in my knee. As the car came towards us, in my attempt to get away, I had turned to the right sustaining all of my injuries to my left side. The collision was head on, but because my dad turned the car to his side he took all of the impact. Things started to settle down, and the facts became more clear. The boy driving the other car had been speeding and hit ice as he came over the top of the bridge. Spinning out of control, he came into our lane and hit us head on. We were going about 30 miles per hour because of the road conditions and the incline. The impact of the accident was about 80 miles per hour. While the paramedics and police officers asked me questions, I tried to remember every moment of the event, but it was as if my memory had been erased. "Did you have your seatbelt fastened?" The question shocked me; of course I had my seat belt fastened. I was a fanatic when it came to wearing a seat belt. I searched my clouded mind and finally came to the ironic conclusion that I had not been wearing my seat belt. The paramedics informed me that if my seat belt had been fastened and locked, the airbag would have hit me full on in the face, and the result could have been dramatically worse. The questions ended, the pace of the night slowed, and my dad and I were finally able to rest. As I closed my eyes that night to enter my dream world, the gratitude and peace I felt seemed to whisper to me, "Everything will be just fine."

Today as I run, jump, and have full physical health, I realize the importance of our missions and the love our Father in Heaven has for us. Looking back, the experience in which my world was the darkest has become the brightest part of my life. That snowy night in January unexpectedly changed from an ordinary night to a night I would never forget. The accident serves as a poignant memory in my life. Nothing is worth more to me than the sight and understanding I gained from living a miracle.