

# Angel in a Van

*By Alecia Newbom*



The heat inside the car was brutal that summer, as I sat anxiously in rush hour traffic, waiting for my chance to merge onto the freeway.

My car was blocking the intersection when it died. Frustrated and panicking, I leaned my head on the steering wheel, praying desperately for my car to start. I asked God to send me an angel, when nothing happened. I had no resources and no cell phone even, to call for help.

Suddenly, my car roared to life and I pulled out of the long line of traffic into a parking lot, breathing prayers of relief and gratitude.

Opening the hood, I looked for anything that might be obvious to my clueless eyes: a broken belt, leaking fluids, pieces falling off the engine, a loose wire. I could see nothing wrong. I closed the hood, begging God to keep His angels near me.

I pulled back into the intersection and to my horror, my car died in the exact spot as before. This time, I couldn't get it restarted. I was as close to the concrete barrier as possible, without plunging off the overpass, but still blocked a whole lane of traffic. I was mortified.

Cars behind me were piling up and people were honking impatiently, making obscene gestures and yelling curses at me out of their windows. That was too much. Leaning my forehead back on my steering wheel, I cried and prayed "God, I could really use that angel right now."

To my left, from the other lane, I heard a voice. A spotless white van had pulled as close to me as it dared and a man called out "Miss, do you need help?" "Yes, yes, I do" I sniffled. The man got out of his van and approached my car, telling me to release the hood. He proceeded to check the fluids in my car using a rag he was carrying, as he poked around, looking for the problem. He was convinced we wouldn't be able to start

the car, so we abandoned it until I could arrange for it to be towed.

The guy offered me a ride home. I climbed into the shiny white van with this oddly emotionless, dark skinned man. I remember his hair was a startling shade of white, seeming almost to glow. He was dressed head to toe in spotless, bright white clothes. His nearly empty van was also spotless, and I asked him, out of sheer curiosity, what he did for a living. He claimed to be a painter.

Not one obvious speck of dirt, spot of paint, or visible painting supplies indicated that he even used the van. It seemed a little odd, but I thanked him repeatedly, unable to contain my gratitude and relief. He'd even picked up my groceries from my back seat and placed them in his van.

In my relief, I chattered excitedly all the way home. It hadn't yet occurred to me that I had readily accepted a ride from a stranger who would now know where I lived. I told him of my prayers for an angel. Determined to get an answer, I looked directly into his ageless face and asked him if he was an angel, God's answer to my prayer.

His face registered no shock, emotion, nor hints that he thought I was crazy. Despite my repeated question over the course of that ride home, he never answered me. I felt no hint of danger, or, in fact, as if I was dealing with an average human. This man was...different. I felt a profound sense of peace in his presence.

Arriving at my home, the nameless man carried my groceries to my door. I thanked him profusely, turning for a second, to unlock my door. I looked back to thank him again but he was gone, vanished. I ran to the street but his van was gone also.

Even in the stifling heat, I shivered, sure I had witnessed a miracle, small, yet big enough that it still moves me.

When I got my car back, the rag the "man in white" had used to check my car's fluids, sat in my passenger seat; ragged, yes, a tiny spot of paint on it, but remarkably clean otherwise. It was a shiny, glossy white, with textured gold threads woven at intervals throughout. It looked like something an angel might have worn before it had become a rag.