

I never thought I was going to die like that; although, to be honest, if I had to do it all over, I wouldn't change a thing. While I wish I were still alive to be with my daughters and watch them grow up and face the problems that girls are bound to encounter, I understand that is not a realistic option. My destiny has been sealed. This is how it has to be. Honestly, I am just happy that it didn't turn out worse than it did. Sure, I wish I could have done more to prevent what did happen, but I did my fatherly duties to the best of my abilities and that is what matters right? I guess the best I can do for them now is watch over them from "up here" and make sure they stay safe. You know, do all I've ever done, ever since the first one was born.

My name was Danny back when my soul possessed its combination of "sand and spit" – or my "body" as they called it "down there". I had three lovely daughters ranging from three months to twelve years old. Oh how I miss them; but I keep the hope that I will one day watch them enter those same pearly gates I so recently entered – hopefully after they experience long and happy life of course, even though the wait will probably "kill me". Heh, oh the irony. Actually, I'm not even sure if time exists up here, but the time I've been away from my daughters already feels like an eternity. Once again, oh the irony.

Well, I see you are still here so you must be interested in how I came to be "up here". It's not really the sweetest of stories but I'm sure it will keep your attention if you like love and forgiveness and all that jazz. It's almost like a "bad 90's sitcom," really. Well, I have a meeting with Jesus in just a few minutes to discuss the "meaningful" questions that theologians such as myself wondered for years while I was on earth, such as if the apostles and Jesus ever passed gas and placed the blame on "Judas" while traveling to Jerusalem and stuff of that sort, so I will go ahead and get started on "why I'm here". I've waited thirty-nine years for that meeting and I don't want to miss it. So make yourself comfortable, grab some manna, and a glass of Jesus' famous wine and I'll fill you in on how I died.

So it all started two months ago, roughly one month after my youngest daughter was born. My wife, Pamela, was killed by a drunk driver on her way home from rushing to the pharmacy for medicine for the youngest in the late parts of night. I don't want to go any further with the details as they pain me to tell (even though pain supposedly doesn't exist up here, it still manages to find it's way to show up) so I will just leave it at that.

Well, obviously the loss of a loved one is tough, but what made it even tougher was the addition of having to adjust and learn to handle the duties of raising three daughters all on my own. Having to hear my daughters say "Dad you have no idea how to fix my hair" or "Dad why can't you pack our lunch the way mom did" just really didn't go over well. I've never been one to ask for help unless I was forced to, but honestly, after two weeks of the "single dad" stuff, I had no where else to turn but to the help of my best friend from college and my

brother-in-law (my wife's brother). They agreed to move in and help out with raising the girls for a couple of months. I was hoping it wouldn't have to be for that long but I was prepared for the worst. It was free food and housing for them and it wasn't like they even had "real" jobs to begin with, so I almost felt like I was doing them more of a favor than they were doing for me.

I thought things were going pretty well - for a few weeks at least. The girls missed their mother, of course, but I think the company of their uncles made them feel comforted and kind of helped keep their mind off the loss of their mom. My best friend from college, Uncle Joe as they liked to call him, was a comedian. He was always finding ways to cheer them up when they were feeling down. When he made my daughters smile, I smiled, which was something that had become hard to do in those last few months. I remember one night especially well. I came home and without them noticing me outside the bedroom, I listened to a conversation between Uncle Joe and my eldest daughter, BJ. As best I can remember, it kind of went like this:

"I don't want to go to junior high" she told Uncle Joe.

"Oh but BJ, you must, how else will all the other kids get to know the most awesome girl in the school?" Uncle Joe responded to her.

"Well, I guess I am pretty cool. I do have greeaaat hair!" she laughed. I could tell she was feeling more secure about her first day of school. And that made me happy.

Uncle Joe looked at her and said "Of course you do! Ooo blow me down gagagagaga" in his perfected Popeye the Sailor Man voice.

Oh how I loved that voice, it could make anybody in the room laugh, regardless of how sad they were. It's too bad he isn't around now to encourage my daughters and help make them feel better about themselves. Oh wow, didn't mean to get too far ahead of myself but now that we are on that topic of Uncle Joe not being "down there" anymore, I might as well explain why.

I don't really know where the whole thing began. I'm sure it was long before I even came to suspect it, but my brother-in-law, Farkus, apparently had a serious drug problem that he never bothered to tell me about before he moved in. Don't get me wrong, Farkus was a great guy and according to my wife, the best brother a girl could ask for. He could always cheer my girls up by playing an old Thin Lizzy tune – heh, that even cheered me up; but the guy had some serious problems. You see, he was a musician and an Elvis Pressley freak as well (actually Elvis told me yesterday that he is quite flattered at all the impersonators down there; he is really an interesting character). Anyways, I'm sure you are familiar with the "wannabe-musician-type". You know, the young rebel who is rapidly approaching his midlife crisis but somehow unable to come to terms with

the reality that he will probably never be as famous as Stevie Ray Vaughn (who says “hi”, by the way). Well, that basically describes my brother-in-law.

I can’t say this with one-hundred percent certainty, but I attribute his heroin addiction to his desire to be a rock star and vice-versa. He always said, ever since I first met him when I was dating Pamela those 14 years ago, that he would “do anything to be like Eddie Van Halen man!” He had the will and the guts, I’ll give him that. He just sported a very unhealthy and dangerous habit that eventually led to his downfall as well as the demise of his two closest friends.

I had my suspicions of his habit a week or so before I actually found out for sure. He was always shaking, exhibiting paranoia, and sure to answer the door before anybody else got the chance to; but I didn’t want to say anything. I didn’t want to offend him. I didn’t want to be “that guy”. After all, he was putting his life on hold to help me and my girls through a tough time. The last thing I wanted to do was accuse him of being a “pot smoking hippy”. But maybe that was my mistake. Actually, yeah, that was my mistake.

Many of my memories while my soul was on that planet “down there” are somewhat fuzzy, but the one that happened just before my death is as clear as the streets of gold that we are standing on right now. I remember it like it was yesterday. Well I’ve lollygagged around enough and I don’t want to miss my meeting with Jesus, so I’m going to go ahead and tell you how I got here.

I had just gotten home from work. I was a sports reporter in San Francisco. Well, I entered the house, with the same smile I always got at the thought of seeing my girls after a long day of work. I had a special plan. I was going to take the family out to a Giants baseball game with some tickets the general manager had given me as a thank you gift. I looked around the living room for my family and said aloud “girls your rad bad dad is home with a surprise!” I didn’t get a response, so I kept looking around. I then decided they must be upstairs playing “beauty parlor” or something as they often times did. Those guys would do anything to make my girls happy.

I ran up the stairs, ready to surprise my family with a night filled with baseballs and hotdogs only to find my best friend, Joe, lying in a pool of his own blood. He was such a great guy and the sight of him like this instantly brought tears to me eyes and anger and alarm to my brain. I continued down the hall, now filled with fear and panic that my girls may also be in danger. I entered their room to find nothing but teddy bears and coloring books on the floor. No sign of them there, but no sign of harm either. There room was as it usually was. I then continued to Farkus’ room. The door was locked. I banged on it as hard as I could.

“Farkus are you in there? Are you alright? Open up! Girls are you in there?” I then heard my middle-aged daughter, Stephy, scream “daddy we are i-“.

She was cut off. I presumed there was somebody in the room that put their hand over her mouth or something to keep her quiet. I wasn't sure, but I had no choice and to assume the worst. I had to get in the room and make sure my family – the only loves I had left - were alright.

Now, my “sand and spit” was pretty strong back then. I could easily bench two to three times my weight. You had to look like an athlete to report about an athlete, after all. Well, I knew I had to get in that room somehow, so I got a running start and I went blazing down the hallway head-on into the locked door and knocked it right down with little-to-no-resistance. I had seen it done in movie and it always looked too easy and unrealistic, well much easier than I expected; but surprisingly, in real life, it wasn't all that difficult. Maybe it was my will to get in that dropped the door so easily. Or my brute strength that I used to have. Or maybe just a combination of both. Either way, I went straight through that door and into the room.

My assumptions were correct, there were indeed people in the room. I still don't know why they were in there with my family as hostages with the door locked – it really made no sense to me for those last few moments I was alive; and even now with my “superior all-knowing” brain, it still doesn't make sense to me. Regardless, one of the two men shot me point blank with his pistol multiple times. I remember at least four shots before my mind quit working and transferred to this place, but I am sure my “skin and spit” was shot multiple times more after my soul departed – it just seems to be very cliché for these types to do that when murdering somebody.

So that was that. Next thing I knew, here I was. Standing at the final judgment. The line of people awaiting their final judgment went forever it seemed, but honestly, it didn't seem to take very long at all for it to be my turn. It was nothing like “a day at the DMV” at least. I could tell I was going to like this “heaven” place. Well, as luck would have it, standing in line three people in front of me was “Uncle Joe”. He was awaiting his final judgment too. I heard him tell “Him” about his life and his “acceptance of Jesus”. “He” looked through his giant book and found Joe's name. He pointed to the door marked “Heaven” and I watched as Joe entered. Joe was displaying such a natural glow as he walked towards that door, almost like he had a brand new “body”... but it didn't really look like a body as we knew them “down there”. It was really quite baffling and continues to baffle me now, even though I have on myself. Maybe I'll ask Jesus about that in a bit.

Well, back to the story, right after Joe was my brother-in-law, Farkus. I stood and watched as he was sentenced to the door marked “Hell”. But before he entered, he turned and looked at me and apologized.

“Danny,” he said, “I am so sorry... about everything”

“What are you talking about?” I said

“The reason you are here. The reason Joe is here. The reason I am here. Is because of me”

“I don’t get it...” I look at him with so much confusion on my face.

“The people who shot you, Joe, and me... they were my drug suppliers. I should have never agreed to move in with you. I knew I had a problem. I knew I shouldn’t have risked my problems creating even larger ones for you. I am sorry. Tell Pam I am sorry.”

“It’s ok Farkus” I responded. For some reason, it really did feel “ok” in my heart. Sure I wish things hadn’t happened this way, but they did, and there was nothing I could do about them.

“I can never forgive myself for this and I don’t blame ‘Him’ for not forgiving me either” he said, sobbing ever so harshly.

“Well it doesn’t matter,” I said, “because I do forgive you, Farkus.” He couldn’t say anymore. The tears were coming down so rapidly. He was then led away to the door marked “Hell” by one of “His” angels and tossed to the hands of what I think were demons. That was the last I ever saw him and the last that I anticipate I will ever see him. It truly saddens me to know he is “way far down there”. I don’t get it. Sadness isn’t supposed to exist in heaven, but here I am, feeling sad for the one responsible for my being here. Not because he cause me to be here, but because I can’t even imagine the pain he is experiencing down there – and I don’t want to. It’s such a bittersweet feeling.

I love it up here, I really do, but I wish I could be with my girls, and I wish Farkus had gotten a chance to straighten up his life and meet “Him” before he too was killed. I do thank “Him” every time we pass by on the streets though, for allowing the next door neighbor to hear the gunshots and alerting the police before any harm was done to my three angels. I can’t wait to thank them one day. And I can’t wait to tell my murderers that I forgive them. As weird as it may sound, I really hope they too enter the pearly gates. Hopefully they too will have straightened out their lives.

Oh gee, look at the “time that doesn’t exist!” Oh well, Jesus is meeting with me and Pamela in just a few minutes so I am going to head over there; and then I think afterwards Joe is putting on a comedic show in the “His” courtyard, so feel free stop by, he has the impression of Moses talking to Pharaoh down perfectly; it is quite hilarious hearing him say “let my people go, man”. And oh yeah, welcome to Heaven, one day you too will have to share with my how you got to be here and I’ll be ready for your story. Take care and enjoy your stay!