

My Guardian Angel

Dawn Baker had been just 11 when a very special doctor saved her mother's life after she suffered an aneurysm. And in a horrible coincidence, 24 years later, Dawn's little girl lay in a hospital with the very same condition. Now little Caitlyn needed a miracle too . . .

"He saved me and my grandma!"

Remember, Mommy, stay with me," Dawn Baker's seven-year-old daughter, Caitlyn, said as she climbed into the dentist's chair.

Like most kids, Caitlyn was nervous about seeing the dentist, but when he came into the room she handed him a picture she'd drawn.

Caitlyn was always drawing pictures and writing poems for people. The dentist smiled at the drawing of the puppy and Caitlyn smiled back. But then Caitlyn suddenly shrieked and kicked her legs. Her eyes closed and her body went limp. At first, they thought she'd fainted out of fright. "Caity! Wake up!" Dawn shouted. But she was passed out cold.

"This can't be happening! Not again!" Dawn cried

"What's wrong?" the Medford, Massachusetts, mother trembled as the dentist dialed 911.

At Children's Hospital Boston, a team of pediatric specialists raced to figure out why Caitlyn had collapsed. A CAT scan, an angiogram . . . they ran a battery of tests.

While they waited for the results, Dawn sat by her daughter's bedside. One hour turned to two, and still Caitlyn didn't stir. Then, finally, her eyelids began to twitch.

"She's waking up!" Dawn shouted. As her eyes fluttered open, Caitlyn spotted her father, Robert, who'd rushed to the hospital.

"Daddy," she breathed, but then her voice went weak. "Change my diaper." Dawn's heart fell, and looking at the doctors, she saw the same worry on their faces.

"Can you tell me how old you are?" one asked.

"Two," Caitlyn replied—and Dawn burst into tears. "What's happened to her?" she sobbed.

Just then, another doctor hurried in with a grave look on his face.

"She has an aneurysm, and it's bleeding heavily," he said. "We have to operate immediately."

"Oh, God, this can't be happening! Not again!" Dawn gasped.

Dawn had been just 11 years old when she and her brother were whisked away to an aunt's house.

"Your mother needs an operation on her brain," Dawn's aunt told them, explaining that she had something called an aneurysm.

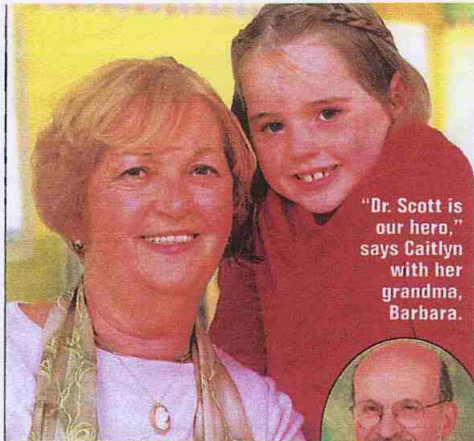
"Is Mommy going to die?" Dawn asked timidly. Back then most people with aneurysms didn't survive the surgery. And not wanting to give Dawn false hope . . .

"She might," her aunt admitted sadly. Tears streamed down Dawn's cheeks. Her mother was a single mom. She was all Dawn had. "I can't lose Mommy!" she sobbed.

Before the surgery, Dawn went to see her mother at Boston's New England Medical Center. As she approached the bed, Dawn's throat tightened. But just then . . .

"Hello, there," a man said.

Turning, Dawn saw a doctor. He was in his late 30s, with kind eyes, a warm smile and . . . a bowtie around his neck!



"Dr. Scott is our hero," says Caitlyn with her grandma, Barbara.

"I'm going to do my best to make your mom well," he said, his voice filled with caring. And suddenly, Dawn wasn't so afraid anymore.

Amazingly, neurosurgeon Dr. Michael Scott did save her mother. Everyone said it was a miracle.

And that's what Caitlyn needs now! Dawn snapped back to the terrifying present. But how many miracles can one family hope for? she wondered.

As Caitlyn was taken to be prepped for surgery, Dawn called her mother to tell her the news and to check on her other two children, 12-year-old Jaime and Jessica, 1 1/2, who'd been spending the afternoon with their grandma. "It's Caitlyn! Her brain is bleeding. She needs surgery," Dawn cried.

"Noooo!" her mother shrieked. Then . . . "Dr. Scott!" she blurted. "Get Dr. Scott!"

If only I could, Dawn thought. But it had been 24 years . . . "I'd never find him in time," Dawn sighed sadly.

But just at that moment a man called her name. Turning, Dawn saw a doctor. He was about 60 or so. He wore glasses, but the eyes peering over the rim were filled with kindness. He had a reassuring

smile and . . . a bowtie!

Dawn's eyes darted to his name plate. "Oh, my God!" she cried. "You're Dr. Michael Scott!"

Incredibly, Dr. Scott was Director of Clinical Pediatric Neurosurgery at Children's Hospital Boston!

"You saved my mother. Please, save my little girl!" Dawn begged, her mother's story spilling out.

Dr. Scott recalled the young girl with the frightened eyes. And though he hadn't been the doctor scheduled to do Caitlyn's operation . . . "I'm going to do her surgery—and I'll do my very best to save her," Dr. Scott promised.

Knowing Caitlyn was in Dr. Scott's hands was a comfort, but still Dawn was terrified. Sitting in the waiting room, Dawn thought about all the joy Caitlyn brought. "She's so kindhearted and thoughtful," people were always telling Dawn. "God, you gave us such a special gift, please, don't take her away," Dawn prayed.

Six long hours ticked by. Then, finally, Dr. Scott emerged from the OR—giving the thumbs-up sign.

"We did it!" he exclaimed. As soon as Caitlyn awakened, Dr. Scott rushed Dawn to the recovery room. Dawn expected her to be groggy. But Caitlyn's blue eyes were wide . . . "Mom, let's go get a Coke and sneak back in. They'll never know I was gone," Caitlyn whispered impishly.

"That's my girl!" Dawn cried.

"Please save my little girl!" Dawn begged

A week later, Caitlyn went home, and the first thing she did was write a poem for Dr. Scott. Called "What is White?" in honor of her hero in a white coat, it describes all the beautiful things in the world that are white. Today, Caitlyn is a healthy eight-year-old, but she still goes to see Dr. Scott—to bring him drawings and poems.

"I love him!" she chirps. "He saved me and my grandma!"

For that, Dawn is eternally grateful. "He's my guardian angel," Dawn says. "Both times I needed him, I just turned around and there he was. He had to be Heaven-sent."

—Elizabeth Holzemer
with Kathy Fitzpatrick

Do you trust your doctor?



Trusting your doctor, as Dawn's family did, can relieve stress and inspire hope. To see how your doc rates on the trust scale, Merrilyn Walton of the medical education department at the University of Sydney, suggests asking:

- Does my doctor ask me questions, explain things clearly and encourage my questions?
- Does she respect me—and my decisions?
- Is she experienced in treating my condition?

Even one "no" may be cause to find a new doctor!

Have you had an encounter with someone truly special, an angel who changed your life? Please send the details along with your name, address and phone number to: My Guardian Angel, Woman's World, 270 Sylvan Ave., Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632. If we print your story, we'll pay you \$250. Submissions may be edited for style.