

Angelvision

Angel VISION

By Sally-Ann Roberts

Foreword by Lisa Martin



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Praise the Lord, O heavens! Praise him from the skies!
Praise him, all his angels, all the armies of heaven.

—Psalm 148:1 Living Bible

Foreword

HAVE YOU EVER WISHED you had the power of discernment? The ability to distinguish good from evil at a glance? You can experience discernment vicariously through the life of Michael Beauchamp in Sally-Ann Roberts's *Angelvision*.

Michael, a tortured soul who has lived his entire tragic life in denial, gets the gift of angelvision so he can learn that things are not always what they appear. You'll find, as did Michael, that no matter how hopeless life may seem, God can and will see you through.

You'll be reminded that God has sent us each angels to watch over us during our stay here on earth. Per Psalms 91:11, "For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways."

See how those angels reveal themselves to Michael in the most unusual way . . . on the streetcar, as a bag lady, as his own dead brother!

Find out why his brother David, who died suddenly and tragically, returns to earth to guide Michael through what looks like one utterly helpless situation after another. See if David, who was forced to take a physical form, was able to help his brother change his life.

You don't have to see your angel in its true form. You can simply recall St. Francis de Sales's words, "Make yourself familiar with the angels, and behold them frequently in spirit; for without being seen, they are present with you."

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Acknowledgments

ANGELVISION ACTUALLY CAME TO ME in a dream. I awoke on fire to put that dream into words. I thought my daughter Judith would be the best one to do that since she enjoyed writing fiction while I report the news.

I sat down at the computer to write an outline of the dream for Judith. But then something unexpected happened. My fingers just seemed to take off across the keyboard. Suddenly I was writing dialogue, and characters were appearing from nowhere.

Some writers call it being in “the zone.” To me it was like taking dictation. What I thought would make a nice short story turned into a novel. Whatever happens from here on out, I thank God for giving me the time of my life.

I also thank God for sending people like Pattie Shoener across my path who has been an excellent sounding board, secretary, babysitter, prayer warrior and, most of all, friend. I can never repay Pattie for the encourager she has been to me.

Phyllis Nabonne, my prayer partner for life, has been an indispensable ally throughout this whole process. I have also been blessed to have Each One Save One co-founder, Cathy Harris, as an inspirational influence in my life. Cassandra Jackson found the time while raising my wonderful godson Fredrick Quintel to offer words of encouragement. And Mrs. Mamie Whiting, whose fitness spa helped me lose weight, also helped me gain spiritual strength. Thank God for praying friends!

Lisa Martin is another friend who played a major role in birthing *Angelvision*. Lisa worked as a news producer in New Orleans, Miami, and Chicago. She is now a Loyola University communications professor. Lisa is also a sister in Christ and for that reason I asked her to critique an early draft of *Angelvision*. Her insights and excellent questions caused me to explore more fully the characters. Lisa was literally a God-sent editor.

I'm also grateful for the expert editing of Saga Terrell. She pushed me to delve even further into the characters' psyches. Working with Saga was a powerful experience.

My parents, Lucimarian and Lawrence Roberts, are among the greatest blessings of my life. I am also grateful for the continuous support of my sisters, Robin Roberts and Dorothy McEwen, and my brother, Lawrence Roberts II.

Thank you Lord for Frank Davis. New Orleans' premier television chef, fisherman, raconteur, and author helped me to find a publisher. I'm indebted to Frank as well as to many other colleagues at WWL-TV including, but not limited to, Eric Paulsen, David Bernard, Angela Hill, Michelle Miller, Brad Panovich, Jimmie Brown, Bobby Willis, Willie Wilson, Jerry Seregni, Tommy McDonnell, Lisa Philip, Misty Crittle, Dionne Butler, Val Amedee, Mark Swinney, Akili Franklin, Al Gautier, Kevin Breen, Bob Eutsler, and Gail Guidry.

I also want to thank Dr. Brobson Lutz and horticulturist Dan Gill for sharing their encyclopedic knowledge to help ensure the accuracy of the information concerning medical issues and foliage native to this area.

Most of all, I thank God for my husband Willie and our beautiful children Judith, Kelly, and Jeremiah. They patiently put up with my love affair with this project. It did become somewhat of an obsession.

Then God sent author LaJoyce Brookshire across my path. She advised me not to prolong the writing process. She said you have to let go of your children.

Angelvision has at last flown the nest.

Prologue

THE CAB DRIVER LOOKED FURTIVELY in the rearview mirror at the lanky young man sprawled across the back seat. His six-foot-three frame flopped like dead weight with each pothole.

The cabbie did not usually pick up drunk hippies on Bourbon Street in the French Quarter. But this one somehow touched his heart. Beneath the long dirty mane of reddish brown hair he saw the young man's sad eyes. There was something tragic about this teenager wearing a tie-dyed tank top, tattered jeans, and sandals on a cold November night.

It was Thanksgiving eve 1967, and Mike Beauchamp was on his way home.

Mike slept as the cab left the bright lights of the Quarter's main drag and made its way to the sedate and tranquil oak-lined avenue of mansions.

"Hey guy! This the address you want?" the Lebanese cab driver asked in disbelief, staring at the three-story white mansion with palatial columns.

Mike looked up groggily. "Yeah."

"You know these people?" the cab driver asked, looking at the impressive St. Charles Avenue address and back again at the drunk young man staggering out of the cab.

"Know these people? I aam these people," Mike slurred, handing the driver a twenty.

"Hey buddy, you want change?" the cabbie called after him, but Mike ignored the question and stumbled through the wrought iron gate.

Everything on the grounds was perfect. Too perfect. A three-tiered fountain was the centerpiece of the neatly manicured garden. The melodious trickling complimented the aroma of sweet olive. The ten-foot-tall shrubs with tiny, white fragrant flowers flanked the entryway of the home.

In happier days, Mike enjoyed blissful moments napping under the buttery sweetness that reminded him of his girlfriend Clover. But those daydreams ended on a June day in 1966. He lost his ability to love. Bitterness was the only thing that kept him going now.

Mike trudged up the ivy-clad brick steps that led to a massive veranda. He looked through the leaded glass doors. The mahogany table topped with a beautiful bird of paradise arrangement was situated beneath a crystal chandelier in the foyer. Everything radiated nobility and tranquility.

“What a sham!” Mike bristled. His mother Sarah had created the illusion of perfection and Mike couldn’t stand by and let her get away with it. He wanted the world to know the truth.

He swatted the fern from its majestic perch beneath a flickering gas lantern next to the door. He picked up the wrought iron plant stand and with all the strength he could muster smashed through the glass door.

Shards of glass crashed to the foyer’s marble floor.

“Mom I’m home!” Mike yelled sweetly.

“What is going on down there?!” A dark-skinned Hispanic man rushed down the steps, putting on his slippers in the process.

“I guess I knocked a little too hard,” Mike smirked while twirling his battering ram in front of him.

“Michael! Thank God you’re home!” The jubilant woman rushed past her younger husband Diego. But her joy quickly turned to panic.

“Ay! Michael don’t move!” Sarah screamed.

It was only then that Mike noticed his blue jeans were red. Blood oozed from a gash on his hand. He began to shake.

“Diego, call the doctor! I’ll make a tourniquet. Michael, we’ll take care of you. Don’t be scared,” Sarah reassured her wounded son before rushing to the guest bathroom for a towel.

But Mike’s shakes were not caused by fright, but memories. It was June 15, 1966. Mike was no longer on St. Charles Avenue but in the middle of Lake Pontchartrain.

His mind was reeling. “Hold on David!” Mike wailed as he blindly made his way down the steps of the house. “We’re going to get you out!” He fell face first into the fountain. He might have drowned had Diego not arrived in time. He pulled his delirious stepson from the blood-streaked water.

“Let me go,” Mike moaned. “David needs me . . . David don’t die.” Mike passed out in his stepfather’s arms.

The next day Mike awoke in his bedroom. His room was just as he left it when he ran away from home the year before. The walls were covered with his paintings and drawings. They ranged from stark black and white geometric shapes to impressionistic landscapes. On the easel was an unfinished oil painting of an exquisitely beautiful girl with flawless tan complexion and warm grey eyes.

“You had quite a night,” Sarah said from a chair in the corner of the room. “How are you feeling?” She stood up and smoothed her raw silk gold dress. Her pearl earrings and necklace gleamed in the morning sun as she opened the drapes.

“Gee, just fine June. Isn’t that how this episode of *Leave It to Beaver* is supposed to end? I must say you’ve got the role of Mrs. Cleaver down pat,”

Mike said cupping his bandaged hand to the side of his head in a glamour pose.

Sarah smiled. "I know I'm overdressed for an ordinary morning. But I spent this Thanksgiving morning in church. Lord knows I have a lot to be grateful for. My son is home!" She looked admiringly at Mike and then turned to the unfinished portrait.

"You really ought to finish this painting. It would be a nice gift for Clover to bring you two back together."

"Clover is just a child." Mike shut his eyes wishing he could return to the Spring of '66 when he started that painting of Clover. He had love, hope, and he even believed in God. Now he had none of that.

"Since when is Clover just a child? She's only a year younger than you," Sarah said with a concerned look.

"I grew up. Clover is still living in some 'Jesus loves me' la la land," Mike snarled.

"You'll feel better after you've had something to eat," Sarah said picking up a breakfast tray from the dresser. "I baked you some of your favorite sweet potato muffins."

"I'm not that hungry." Mike placed a bandaged hand over his eyes.

Sarah put the tray back down and sat on the bed next to her son. She gently smoothed his hair with her palms. "I can't tell you how hard I was praying for you to come home Michael."

Mike bolted upright and looked incredulously at this mother. "Maybe now you know how David and I felt when you walked out on us."

Sarah stared at her son until he looked away. "I never should have left you boys. I will regret that the rest of my life. But we have got to pick up the pieces of our lives and move forward Michael."

"You've never had a problem with that, have you Sarah? Dad wasn't cold in the coffin when you married a younger man and had his baby."

Diego who had been listening from the other side of the door walked into the room.

"Well well well, if it isn't Ricky Ricardo in the flesh." Mike glared at the lean handsome man who was a study in contrasts. His starched white shirt was open at the neck revealing a milk chocolate complexion. His black slacks matched his jet black hair. He parted his lips into a smile, revealing a perfect alignment of brilliant white teeth which complimented his intense dark eyes.

"Good morning Michael. Sweetheart." He placed a reassuring arm around his forty-year-old wife and tenderly kissed the top of her blond June Cleaver-esque coif.

"I may be ten years younger than your mother, but I love her very much and we both love you."

That caused Mike to burn. "Well you both make me sick. What's love got to

do with anything, huh? Dad gets killed—uh—dies and you go on. David dies and you go on as if he didn't matter."

"I miss David every bit as much as you do. But God has given me peace and strength. He will help you too. But first you have to want it."

Mike smirked and turned his head.

"Please listen to your mother," Diego placed his hand on his stepson's shoulder.

Mike jerked his arm away. "Don't give me that mother crap! She's as much my mother as a black widow spider."

"Don't you dare talk to your mother like that!" Diego pointed a stern finger at Mike.

"I can see I have already overstayed my welcome. I'm ready to split this love nest. If you'll excuse me, ma'am, I'll need privacy to get dressed." Mike gestured toward the door.

"Michael, it's Thanksgiving," Sarah pleaded. "The turkey's in the oven. Your Aunt Bessie is bringing her shrimp creole that you love. Your baby sister is planning a piano recital for you and—"

"I don't have a sister or brother or father or mother. In short I have nothing but a job. I'm enlisting in the Army. I only came home to get my birth certificate."

"I forbid it! You're only eighteen years old," Sarah protested.

"Yes, I am eighteen and I don't need your permission. I'll send you a postcard from Vietnam."

Sarah buried her face in Diego's chest.

"Do you take some perverse pleasure in hurting your own mother?" Diego winced.

"No," Mike said changing his tone. He exhaled. "I wish I could be the son you want. I see people laughing all the time and wonder what they find so funny. I see couples walking hand-in-hand and look at you two holding each other. You don't think I want that? I wish I could dream with Clover again. I can't." Mike wrestled to sit up higher in the bed as he continued, anxious to be understood.

"Don't you see those muffins over there could be made of sawdust and I wouldn't know the difference? I can't taste anything. I'm drained. I can't make small talk over a turkey dinner and act like everything is all right in the world because it isn't."

Mike shoved back the bedspread and flung his feet to the floor.

"Please lay down, son. You need your rest." Sarah patted the arm of his lemon yellow flannel pajamas.

Mike's drooping brown eyes glistened as he continued. "Bumming around from job to job and city to city this past year, I had a lot of time to think. I figured it all out. You and me . . . all of us . . . we're just pawns. Space aliens or gods are

using us in some cosmic game of chess. We stay on the board until we get knocked off. Then it's over. No heaven. No hell. It's just over."

Sarah and Diego looked at each other and sadly shook their heads. Their reaction wasn't lost on Mike.

"You think I'm crazy. Maybe I am some sort of freak of humanity. I don't fit into your world and I never will." Mike stood up to prepare to leave.

"Oh son, you are so wrong." Sarah gently patted his back. "Jesus is the answer."

Mike turned and stared blankly at his mother for a moment and then burst into laughter. "Jeeesus! That's good." Mike sat down on the edge of his bed gasping for breath. He laughed until tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Come on Sarah. He can't hear you right now." Diego led Sarah from the room. Michael's laughter echoed down the hall. But as he sat there in the empty room, he was not alone, for the eyes of Heaven were watching.

"Captain, he's back again."

"Persistent rascal, isn't he?"

"He wants this very badly."

"Well, tell him his petition has been granted."

"You mean he's in, Captain?"

"Yes. Tell him to report to angel boot camp."

