

## BY THE GRACE OF GOD

By: Nancy Quatrano

Copyright 2008

That late July morning was as gloomy as my emotional state. My marriage was falling apart; the bank repossessed our company truck two days before, one day before I'd have been able to pay the arrears in full. Our restaurant was losing money faster than we could bring it in and I couldn't figure out why. And I was seven months pregnant with the child doctor's said I'd never have. My growing belly and swollen feet were my pride and joy.

In June, three men had broken into our restaurant, held us at gun point and stolen all they could carry. I had nightmares every time I closed my eyes, so my husband told me to find a house to rent so we could move out of the living quarters behind the restaurant. That's why I was in South Toms River, New Jersey, on that dreary morning. To retrieve the deposit monies. He was not happy with my choice of locations. Since I'd made the choice, it was up to me to get the money back.

I drove the Garden State Parkway to the Double Trouble Road exit and zipped along the wet ramp to the yield sign. Too fast, too tired, too distracted, I accelerated onto the main road and went into a spin.

Round and round and round I went, unable to bring the car back under control. Then I stopped. As surely as a gigantic hand had gripped the small car, it was still. I sobbed with relief that I hadn't hit anyone or anything. Then I gulped in huge breaths and assured my baby all was okay.

I never saw the car that hit me. The crash was in the driver's side door, glass shattering and metal screeching and groaning as the car rolled twice and came to rest upright again. I couldn't breathe, had terrible pain and couldn't move. I prayed for God to help us as I'd prayed so often in the past eight months.

**EXCERPTED FROM THE SHORT MEMOIR BY THE SAME TITLE, TO BE PUBLISHED  
IN 2010.**