

'I Saw an Angel'—R&B Artist Describes Violent Wake-Up Call

Marcus Stanley is a talented pianist, playing for some of the biggest names in the music industry.

His career almost came to a tragic end when he was shot eight times at close range. Thanks to divine intervention, he's now playing music set to a different tune.

Music has flowed through Stanley's blood for as long as he can remember. He learned to play the piano with little training—something he calls a gift from above.

"I would really hear stuff on the radio and I would play things that I heard other people do," he told *CBN News*. "It was all God-given because I hadn't had the training or anything. It was because I really wanted to play."

His Big Break

He started out in church but longed for a bigger stage. That big break came after dropping out of high school.

"I got discovered just being at a concert and I actually filled in for someone," Stanley recalled. "The guy was a music director for the group and he gave me a card and told me to call him, so I started touring really at the age of 16 and went around actually about 42 states out of the 50."

Stanley played for some of the biggest names in the music industry, including R&B singer Chris Brown.

He later began traveling with gospel artists such as Donnie McClurkin, but he said he wasn't interested in the message in their music at that time.

"I was not focused on the people," he explained. "I was not focused on the message. I was not focused on Christ. I was really focused on just making it—being a musician, being a popular musician and playing for a great artist

"Oh yeah, the money too," he added. "That would probably be No. 1 'cause it was fast money."

Enjoying success, Stanley lived extravagantly, traveling the country with well-known musicians.

All of that changed the night of April 2, 2004.

"We got in late every night," Stanely said. "I was actually walking to the store. I realized I didn't have my wallet and hadn't reached the store yet, but I turned around and started walking back to go get my wallet and I saw these guys standing on the corner that night and they were watching."

One of the men then approached him.

"When he said, 'What are you doing out here?' I said, 'I'm just chillin,'" Stanely recalled. "He said, 'Well, you gotta roll out.' That's when he pulled out a gun from his jacket. He had a leather jacket on and a hoodie, and he pulled it out and pointed at me, shot it one time."

After falling to the ground, he was shot seven more times—up close.

'I Saw an Angel'

"When I first saw the flash I didn't know I got shot," Stanley said. "I just remember hitting the ground and then when he stood over top of me that's when I saw an angel get in front of me. And I remember it because I didn't have time to think about that. It was an instantaneous thing."

He continued to describe what he saw.

"It was probably—I mean I'm 6-foot-7—and the angel was probably like 7-foot-something," he said. "It was just a transparent figure. I couldn't tell if it was a male or female. I didn't see wings or anything like that. I saw it was clear, transparent and it was in front of me."

"I knew it was an angel just because the protection," he continued. "It got into a position like this [arms crossed] in front of me and I remember seeing that."

The men stood over Stanley, laughing, thinking they had just killed him.

Still barely alive, he managed to dial 911. By the time paramedics arrived, they offered little hope he would survive.

"I was like 'God help me. Help me make it,'" Stanley recalled. "I just remember trying to stay awake. I thought that would be the key."

"It was like a movie. You see that stuff in a movie. You see the light up. You see people see their life flashing before their eyes. It was like that for me except that I started thinking what would happen if I did die. And I was like nobody's going to know what happened to me," he said.

At the hospital, Stanley went immediately into surgery where he recalled seeing a familiar face.

"Saw a lot of doctors and nurses kind of standing and I remember looking as I'm getting ready for surgery, I remember looking and seeing the same angel that was on the street and the angel was just kind of like arms crossed. ... It didn't do anything or say anything. It was kind of like nodding its head," he said.

Doctors faced a major challenge while operating.

"I had my colon reattached, half my stomach got removed, my spleen got removed completely, half of my pancreas," Stanley

told *CBN News*. “I had some very intensive surgery. There are certain things about my body that are not the same.”

That meant months in rehab, including learning to walk again. Another major change—nerve damage in his right arm left him without feeling in his hand.

Miraculous Recovery

Doctors told Stanley his piano playing days were over. But he proved them wrong, making it back to touring within months.

The amazing recovery came with a price, however, as he popped pain killers for relief. Thankful to be alive, his relationship with God was still shallow.

Five years later, he hit rock bottom, struggling with drug addiction and depression.

“I got to a point where in desperation I was like, ‘I can’t do this anymore.’ And that’s when everything changed for me as far as me pursuing, saying, ‘I need Jesus.’ Took me a long time to get there,” Stanley said.

Police later told him that a gang initiation led to his shooting. They caught the men but witnesses wouldn’t testify against them, allowing them to go free.

Today, Stanley travels the world sharing his story. He says his love of music is now part of his life’s mission, which includes talking with youth groups and high school students.

“It’s not really about the music,” he explained. “It’s more about what God’s done in my life, and I aim to make Him famous at everything I do and to show his glory.”