

At the Right Moment

This was my daughter's third time in the hospital. I wasn't sure I could bear it

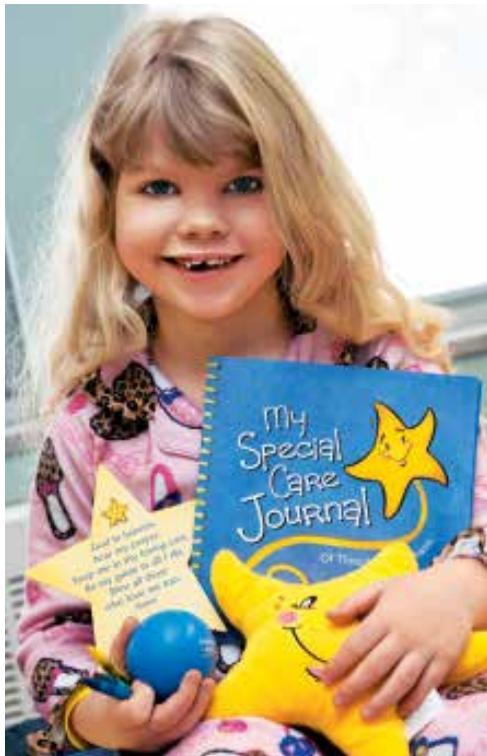
By **DORI SHARP**
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ILAY IN THE HOSPITAL BED WITH my six-year-old daughter, Elizabeth, cradling her in my arms.

"Mommy?" she asked, looking up. "Will you stay with me the whole time?"

"You know I can't be in the operating room," I said carefully, not wanting to scare her. "But Daddy and I will be waiting right outside." Elizabeth nodded, but her eyes looked troubled.

It had been so long—too long—since I'd seen that big smile of hers. Elizabeth had broken her right leg back in July. Seven months later, it still hadn't healed. In fact, it had gotten worse. She was here in the hospital for surgery. I wanted to tell her that everything would be okay, promise that this would be the



COURTESY DORI SHARP

last time she'd have to go through this. But what if something went wrong again? How could I comfort my daughter when I needed comfort myself?

I hugged her closer. She'd been so brave the day of the accident, when she fell off her bike in our backyard. I rushed her to the emergency room, trying not to panic.

While the doctor wrapped her leg in a cast, Elizabeth reminded me that we had forgotten to pray. We held hands and said, "Dear Jesus, please help Elizabeth." Short and sweet.

I repeated that prayer silently now. This time we were at Shriners Hospitals for Children in St. Louis, 250 miles from home. It was hard to be so far away, but we needed the best possible care for Elizabeth. She'd faced so many complications. Her first cast came off four weeks after the accident, but something was clearly wrong. The slightest pressure on her leg or foot shot waves of pain through her body.

So she spent three weeks in another cast. Her leg didn't improve. I'd followed the doctor's orders and made sure Elizabeth stayed off her feet—even though that meant missing a lot, including her first day of school and playing Little League baseball with her friends. Why wasn't she getting better?

There was a knock at the door. A nurse? I thought. *Time to say goodbye already?* But the woman who came in wasn't wearing scrubs. A brief reprieve.

"Hi, there," the woman said. "I'm the chaplain here, and I've got a present for Elizabeth." She handed a bright-blue box to my daughter.

Elizabeth sat up and inspected the gift. She opened it and started pulling out goodies one by one—crayons, stickers, a plush toy in the shape of a star. She hugged the star, perking up for the first time since she'd entered the hospital.

"Thank you," she said. She rummaged in the kit some more. She pulled out a star-shaped card.

"Mommy, look!"

"A prayer card," I said. I held her hand and read aloud:

God in heaven, hear my prayer,
Keep me in thy loving care.
Be my guide in all I do,
Bless all those who love me too. Amen.

There was that big smile of hers! I looked at the box more closely. It was from Guideposts Outreach, and the words *Guideposts for Kids Comfort Kit* were written across the front. Not only for kids. Comfort for moms too. **G**

SPIRIT LIFTER Elizabeth on the road to recovery with her reader-supported Guideposts for Kids Comfort Kit



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