Please, God, I`m only 17.

The day I died was an ordinary school day. How I wish I had taken the bus! But I was too cool for the bus. I remember how I wheedled the car out of Mom. ''Special favour,'' I pleaded. ''All the kids drive.'' When the 2:50 bell rang, I threw all my books in the locker. I was free until 8:40 tomorrow morning! I ran to the parking lot, excited at the thought of driving a car and being my own boss. Free!

It doesn`t matter how the accident happened. I was goofing off--going too fast. Taking crazy chances. But I was enjoying my freedom and having fun. The last thing I remember was passing an old lady who seemed to be going awfully slow. I heard a deafening crash and I felt a terrible jolt. Glass and steel flew everywhere. My whole body seemed to be turning inside out. I heard myself scream.

Suddenly I awakened; it was very quiet. A police officer was standing over me. Then I saw a doctor. My body was mangled. I was saturated with blood. Pieces of jagged glass were sticking out all over. Strange that I couldn`t feel anything.

Hey, don`t pull that sheet over my head! I can`t be dead. I`m only 17. I`ve got a date tonight. I`m supposed to grow up and have a wonderful life. I haven`t lived yet. I can`t be dead.

Later I was placed in a drawer. My folks had to identify me. Why did they have to see me like this? Why did I have to look at Mom`s eyes when she faced the most terrible ordeal of her life? Dad suddenly looked like an old man. He told the man in charge, ''Yes, he is my son.''

The funeral was a weird experience. I saw all my relatives and friends walk toward the casket. They passed by, one by one, and looked at me with the saddest eyes I`ve ever seen. Some of my buddies were crying. A few of the girls touched my hand and sobbed as they walked away.

Please--somebody--wake me up! Get me out of here! I can`t bear to see my mom and dad so broken up. My grandparents are so racked with grief they can hardly walk. My brother and sisters are like zombies. They move like robots. In a daze, everybody! No one can believe this. And I can`t believe it, either. Please don`t bury me! I`m not dead! I have a lot of living to do! I want to laugh and run again. I want to sing and dance. Please don`t put me in the ground. I promise if you give me just one more chance, God, I`ll be the most careful driver in the whole world. All I want is one more chance.

Please, God, I`m only 17!