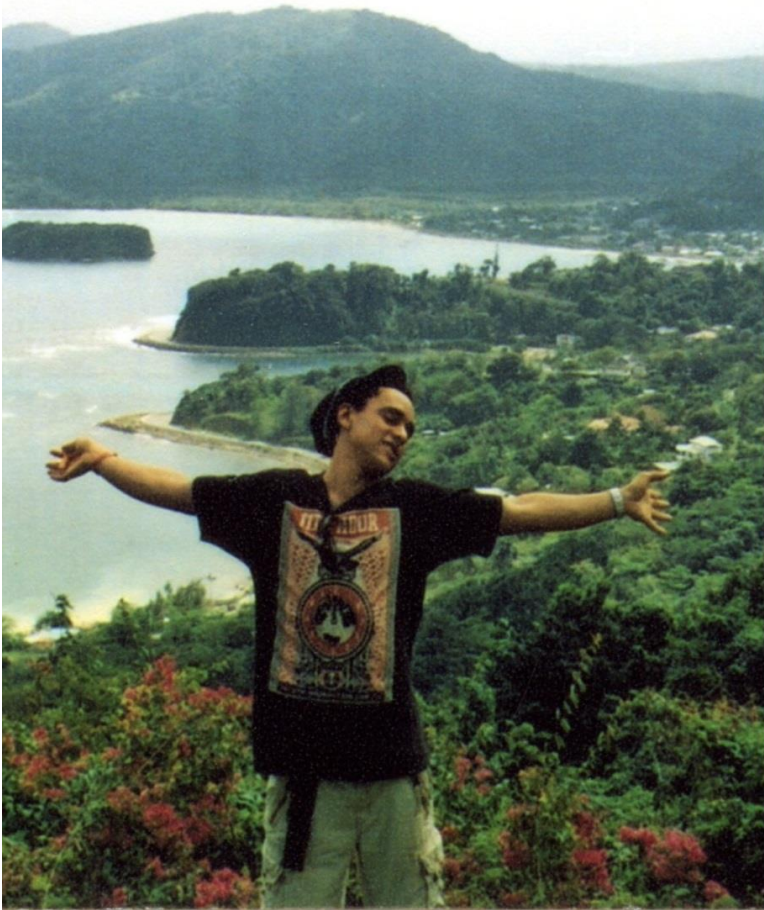


# For the Love of Daniel

Ann Goffe



# FOR THE LOVE OF DANIEL

By  
Ann Goffe



Open Door Publications

For the Love of Daniel

ISBN: 978-0-9888319-5-7

Copyright © 2013 by Ann Goffe

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without the written permission of the author except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Published by  
Open Door Publications  
2113 Stackhouse Dr.  
Yardley, PA 19067

[www.OpenDoorPublications.com](http://www.OpenDoorPublications.com)

Cover Design by Alec Grosso  
"alecgrossoillustration.tumblr.com"



**Excerpts from Daniel's Facebook page  
written after his death**

May Angels lead you in. **Sarah** \* Blessed be dear Dan. We love you. **Gabriella** \* If I have half the people loving me than you have, then we are never truly dead. **E.Kinns** \* You never fell short Brother. I love you for that. **Sarah** \* I hope you know how many lives you touched. **Sophia** \* I will always love you. **Alex** \* Danny boy please come back. **Hannah** \* I love you I love you I love you. **Jessica** \* You will forever live on through all the people who love you (which is a whole whole whole lot of people. **Kelli** \* May we cherish every day we have left that much more and never fail to show love and positivity. **Henry** \* I will never forget you, your smile your laugh your voice. **La Mer** \* It was a great time where ever you were, I've been lucky to be a part of it. **Jeff** \* Crying for you and all who love you. And remembering with a smile your fantastic charisma. **Evangeline** \* Your love and light were felt by everyone around you. **Sarah** \* We hung your sunglasses from the rear view mirror so you can keep an eye on us at work. **Justin P** \* Everyone around can appreciate that their lives were a little better for having known you. **Justin** \* A light within, a doorway opens, you are unfolded in ease and joy. **Camrilla** \* Can see you everywhere, in the plants and the trees. I will always feel you flowing through my entire being. You were my best friend, love of my life, my soul mate. I will forever love you. **Jessica** \* I just miss you so much you goof, you are freakin everywhere. **Sarah** \* Every time the wind blows. Every time I look up at the night sky I feel you there. I saw a meteor and I know it was you taking a ride through the sky. I miss you. **Benjamin** \* I asked to see a shooting star and you made it happen. Keep the spiritual signs coming. I want to believe. **Hannah** \* God did not take you from us. He gave you to heaven so your light could shine over all the world. **La Mer** \* I was having a really rough time Sunday morning. And then you hit me with that strong breeze. Thank you for that. **Rory** \* There was just one star in the sky just hanging out next to the moon. I could really feel your presence. I'd like to think that star was you, the only one bright enough to shine that night, and the only one cool enough to be friends with such a beautiful moon. **Caitlyn** \* Sometimes I feel this overwhelming aura of pimpness and swagger mixed with a little bit of fitted caps and mischief. That's when I know you're watching me. **Nadira** \* I read there was a meteor shower on your birthday. Way to go. **Rachel** \* And its you are whatever a moon has always meant, and whatever a sun will sing is you, I carry your heart with me (carry it in my heart. **Jessica** \* You've brought so much light and love to all of our lives from the other side. Today I am loving life in your honor. Miss you and love you Daniel Goffe. **Katy**

**For Daniel ...  
with love**

*The moon looks like a smile in the sky.  
Why, why does it smile in the sky?  
I know, I think I know  
Why that smile began to grow.  
The next day the sun wiped the smile away*

Daniel Goffe

# Table of Contents

Introduction

Chapter 1: Surprise, Surprise

Chapter 2: The Prince

Chapter 3: North to Philly

Chapter 4: Mt. Airy

Chapter 5: School

Chapter 6: High School

Chapter 7: Shmutty

Chapter 8: Lady and Mister

Chapter 9: Blain

Chapter 10: Searching for a Cure

Chapter 11: Landscaping

Chapter 12: Opium

Chapter 13: Kenneth gets Sick

Chapter 14: Kenneth Dies

Chapter 15: Sandy the Psychic

Chapter 16: Jessica

Chapter 17: Suboxone

Chapter 18: The Garden

Chapter 19: Ghosts and Orbs

Chapter 20: No Rise or Fall, No Breath

Chapter 21: Getting to Know Daniel

Chapter 22: The Memorial

Chapter 23: The Undertow

Chapter 24: Butterflies and Birds  
Chapter 25: After Death Communication  
Chapter 26: Dreams, Shooting Stars, Rainbows  
Chapter 27: Enter Danny  
Chapter 28: Joyous, Free and Light  
Chapter 29: Talking to Danny  
Chapter 30: Happy Birthday Danny  
Chapter 31: Jenny's Back  
Chapter 32: Christmas in Jamaica  
Chapter 33: Hello Again, Danny  
Chapter 34: First Signs of Spring  
Chapter 35: Spring  
Chapter 36: Happy Anniversary, Danny  
Chapter 37: The New Kingdom

## Introduction

It is evening on July 12, 2011. The twilight sky is flawless and two hundred people are gathered in a welcoming garden in Mount Airy, Philadelphia. We are saying goodbye to my son Daniel, who had died two weeks before. He was twenty-three. The company is mixed, mostly young people Daniel's age, but also many parents. There are people of different faiths, occupations, race and national background; many are artists and musicians. People know each other; they walk around greeting, hugging and holding each other. Many are crying. There is great sadness but there is also another feeling that quietly engulfs the group. The evening lights up; it vibrates softly in a gentle explosion of love.

I begin the ceremony with thanks to all who have supported my family in the shock and grief that follow an untimely death. And then I thank Daniel's friends.

“Over the past two weeks you have come in numbers to visit me and the family. You have told us how much you love Daniel, that nothing can ever replace him. He was your hero, shining star, your bridge over troubled waters. You tell me that he walked with a light that lit up rooms.



He was the party, but also the one who would never let you down, who you called on in your darkest hours. He was the friend who inspired you to be your best self, he made you feel your dreams.

“In essence, your message to me has been very clear and it is this: Be proud, be very proud to be Dan Goffe's mother.”

The irony is that this son of whom I remain very proud, was no hero in the conventional way of things. To the contrary, he was an addict who fought a losing battle with drugs and alcohol for the last ten years of his short life. In many ways, Daniel fit the profile. His highest academic achievement was a GED won by blood sweat and tears: his and mine. He was a regular in juvenile court for countless misdemeanors, and in the stipulated community service programs. Daniel had done in-patient and outpatient mental health time and attracted an array of diagnoses including ADHD, bipolar and anxiety disorders.

At the same time, Daniel had used his life to create this gathering of goodwill. He was the inspiration for the small tidal swell of loving kindness that overtook us in the garden that night. I listened to his peers as they described how Danny had touched and changed their lives. As they paid tribute to his person, celebrating his way of being and mourning their irreplaceable loss, Daniel appeared more like a local superhero than an addict and chronic underachiever. The roles should be mutually exclusive, but Danny it seemed, had played both with ease.

How could this be?

\*\*\*

Daniel died on the night of June 21, 2011. I do not know the time. If it was before midnight, he left on the last night of spring. If it was in the early hours, it was the first morning of summer. Either one feels appropriate and poignant.

Danny's death started a series of events that changed and continue to change my life. In moments I am catapulted into a new consciousness, a sudden awareness that our understanding of ourselves and the world we live in is disastrously limited.

In these moments, abstract ideas, such as eternity, become real and present in daily life as Danny reveals himself in a new way. I realize that Danny, his spirit, his quintessential nature, is not dead. His personality is as intact and recognizable as when he lived downstairs. Danny is alive and well and lives in a neighboring world. Best of all, I have discovered that our two worlds are not separate, but finely attuned and can be bridged in a regular engagement of ideas and feelings. I do not have to be satisfied with memories, and I do not have to accept finality. I can create a new relationship with my son in present time.

This experience turns life as I have assumed it inside out and upside down. Through this lens there is the promise of new heights and depths of perception and understanding. In these moments I am gripped and lifted up by the core of Daniel's message. Neither time, nor space, nor flesh, not even death, can conquer love. And in the end, love is all that matters.

I am not alone. Countless of Dan's many, many friends are having the same kind of experience, in big ways and small. Danny lives on. He has spoken to us through butterflies, birds, and flowers; in sunsets, moonlight and shooting stars. He also speaks in words, thoughts that flash through the mind calling attention, giving advice, sharing a joke, showing a path. He is in fact quite a show off. Danny's friends feel that he still intervenes to spur them on to do their best and live their dreams.

I often told Daniel as we struggled through the last ten years of his life that he was my best teacher. I have discovered that he's not finished yet. But this time, there

will be no anguish, no roller coaster ride of hope and despair, no addiction or codependency, no guilt, no fear. We will still be mother and son. He will still be teacher, but this time, he tells me, it will be just for joy.

## Chapter 8: Lady and Mister

*I come from a crack in the ground, a hole in the wall*

Beanie Sigel  
*Got Nowhere*

Shmutty was a small miracle, but she didn't solve the school problem. Action plans were thin on the ground. Should we try an internet school, home school, no school?

The best solution was very simple and it came from Danny.

“Why don't you just let me get a GED?”

And he did.

In other areas of his life Daniel fought for survival. He was a gifted athlete, graceful, strong and swift. He had played a brilliant center forward for an area soccer team. Now he floundered on the way to the goal and told me after, “I hear voices telling me they are going to make me miss that goal. They are going to make my life a living hell.”

I shuddered. These were the demons Danny danced with and if he came to believe their voices, the threats would become self-fulfilling prophecy.

Daniel's company didn't change. He was surrounded by friends, some in trouble like himself, but many steady kids making their way nicely through high school and later college. The group had been friends through grade school and now embarked on a few years of moderately wild adolescence.

There were regular citations for underage drinking or smoking, breaking curfew, disturbing the peace, loud parties. Daniel's first run-in with the law was a charge for disorderly conduct. He and friends were hanging out on the street corner. A police car passed, turned and passed back. There was no hard evidence, but there were empty beer

cans and the smell of cannabis and one of the kids had an attitude. They were all charged with breaking the curfew and given a court date.

“There is no need for serious concern,” said the lawyer. “Daniel will need to appear in court, plead guilty and sign up for community service. There will be nothing permanent on record.”

Kenneth and I went with Daniel to the preliminary hearing. It was in a precinct in the bowels of North Philly, stark, dirty and very depressing. Daniel's fellow defendants were a sorry lot. The homeless, the mentally ill, the addicted and a handful of high-risk teenagers like himself.

“The halt, the lame, the blind and the Goffes,” Kenneth muttered.

The proceedings were routine until the guard escorted the last defendant from the lock up.

I will call her Lady. She was a small thin woman somewhere in her forties, once beautiful, now very much the worse for wear. Lady reeked of alcohol and stale urine. She behaved very well in front of the judge, explaining politely that she had been served a great injustice because she had been arrested and she had only had one beer. But when the guard blocked her exit and directed her to sit, right in front of Daniel, and await the proceedings of the court, Lady was insulted. Showing her fists, stomping, sitting, then jumping to her feet, she shouted, “Just one beer! I say just one beer!” Each upswing of her arms propelled the odor of sweat and alcohol over her unfortunate neighbors.

The guard hovered, waiting for the order to remove Lady from the courtroom. People kept their eyes averted. I was scanning the room for an empty seat to escape to. Kenneth, head down breathing through his mouth, was embarrassed because he knew I was scanning. I saw a seat. I jumped up, Kenneth pulled me back down. Everyone

looked the other way. Except Daniel, who looked right into Lady's eyes.

Lady at last felt she had a participating audience and said again with loud conviction, "Just one beer."

Daniel nodded and grunted and smiled a little.

Lady looked confused. "One beer," she repeated, but her voice was softer, almost pleading.

Daniel reached out and very gently straightened Lady's collar. Lady looked down at her straightened collar, then lifted her head and straightened her shoulders to match. Danny pointed to Lady's empty chair and made a gesture with his hands that seemed to say, "Why not?"

Lady sat down and stayed quiet. The guard scratched his head and the courtroom sighed with relief. I hoped the judge noticed.

"How did you do that?" I asked on the way home.

Daniel shrugged, frustrated with me and the world that never seemed to get it, "She only wanted someone to listen to her."

The next citation was for public urination.

"It was nothing, Mom. I was sitting with Lana and friends on her stoop. I needed to pee and I couldn't make it up three flights."

"Simple as that." I was sarcastic; court appearances were becoming a part of family life.

On the appointed morning I took Daniel downtown to Juvenile Court. My anxiety had gotten us there twenty minutes early, without breakfast, so we walked over to the nearby food cart and I gave Danny money for a sandwich.

There was a homeless man strategically positioned to the side of the cart. I will call him Mister. Mister eyed Daniel hopefully. Danny approached the window of the cart, looked at Mister, and then pointed to the board which displayed the variety of chips available. Keeping his eyes on Mister, Daniel pointed to each one in turn - sour cream and onion, salt and vinegar, barbecue, and when he got to

Lay's Classic, Mister nodded. Danny then repeated the procedure with the drink cans on display. Mister chose Pepsi. So Danny got his egg and cheese and Mister got his Lays and Pepsi and we returned to the courthouse.

I was thoughtful. Danny didn't give Mister a handout, he offered him, albeit it from a limited menu, the breakfast of his choice. A small difference, but in that moment Mister was no longer a beggar, he was a peer. Danny did for the least of his brethren, and even though I was marshaling a juvenile offender into court, I felt proud.

## Chapter 19: Ghosts and Orbs

*I walk through the valley where the shadow of death is*

Kanye West

*Jesus Walks*

I had a haunting feeling that things could be perfect even as they got worse. Danny became obsessed with ghosts. He watched ghost shows on TV and the internet constantly. Jess said she couldn't get him interested in anything else on the 100-plus channels and he begged her to look at them with him. I watched a few.

I had no conviction about ghosts, but I was open to the idea. The night of my father's funeral I was woken in the night by a strong but gentle current of energy shaking my shoulders. Barely awake, I struggled up to see a man dressed in a charcoal gray suit sitting on the side of my bed. I thought I was hallucinating from sleep deprivation, and slumped back down. Then I felt the current again, stronger this time, and looked up to see the man still sitting there. He didn't say anything but the words "visiting briefly, saying goodbye" came to mind, and then I was asleep again. If this was a ghost it felt transient and benign, even comforting.

The shows Danny was watching were sensationalized and spooky. They were presented like a treasure hunt, without spiritual context. Danny was particularly fascinated by the orbs, or ghosts in the form of balls of light. As he described them my spine tingled. Because I suddenly knew, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Danny believed without the shadow of a doubt, that he was watching something extraordinary and real, and important to his life. I overheard many conversations with his friends on the subject, always with Danny trying to persuade the others that ghosts were real and should be taken seriously.



I tormented myself with the idea that the ghosts were prophetic and struggled with a sense of foreboding. There was something else that concerned me. Danny had begun to seek out the company of older men. He began to frequent a bar where the regulars were in their sixties. He got closer to Craig, his boss. It should have felt like a good thing, this reach-ing out for mentors to fill the hole in his heart left by his father. But the words “council of elders” kept going through my mind. I didn't know where the words came from or what they meant, but they felt ominous. One night I saw a crescent moon and remembered Danny's first poem. Fear clutched at my stomach, the moon's smile now loomed like a specter in the sky.

Danny still refused rehab and the conventional twelve-step recovery model. I scratched the bottom of the barrel for action plans. I thought about the twelve vital interlocking steps, and the principle of regular meetings. There is another component, fundamental to the AA program and that is the idea of surrender to a force greater than the self. For many this would be God, for the more secular minded, higher power. If Danny was not willing to work the twelve steps, would it be possible for him to make a direct connection with higher power? In other words, have a spiritual experience that might inspire him to do the steps?

It felt right. The idea that Danny suffered from spiritual hunger was not new, it was a theme in my attempts to understand him and his addiction. But how does one engineer a spiritual experience; it is hard enough to do for oneself much less for another. Which spirit should I choose? Given Daniel's unbounded capacity for relationships, it seemed the spiritual experience should be of a personal God. He had never shown particular interest in my familiar Christian heritage. It had to be something compelling, irresistible. Something to give him the hope and confidence to work the twelve steps. An experience

that would co-opt the negative energy of the addiction and consume it in a spiritual awakening. It should be something ecstatic. It felt risky, but what could be more dangerous than the status quo?

Sarah heard about a priest who practiced the Ifa faith native to the Yoruba peoples of West Africa. Facundo came well recommended, so Sarah took Danny to meet with him.

Danny left the meeting upbeat. He liked the priest and was looking forward to seeing him again.

But it was not to be.

## Chapter 20: No Rise or Fall, No Breath

*Temporary escapes become permanent exit*

Justin Phillippi

Two weeks later on the morning of Tuesday the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, 2011, I came down to the kitchen. It was seven o'clock but there was no sound of Danny stirring downstairs. He should have been up and getting ready for work. I went down to his room. Daniel was in a heap on the floor. I looked at his chest as I had done so many times before, waiting for it to rise in the reassuring act of breathing. But his body was utterly still and I knew this time there would be no rise, or fall. No breath.

Thankfully, mercifully there was no sign of stress on his face or in his body, nothing to suggest that he had suffered in any way. He looked like he had simply fallen asleep in mid step. I knelt down and laid my cheek against his. Fear of this moment had launched a thousand action plans over more than a decade. The moment was here. Danny was gone.

I knew I would replay this Tuesday morning again and again. I was grateful that even though shocking, it was peaceful. I said a prayer for all those parents who have to witness their child in death and then remember their body bruised by violence or a wracking illness. I gave thanks that Danny looked young and fit, curiously unharmed despite the line of Xanax on his table.

The first stage is shock. Urgent logistics helped to ground me. I knew the company network would begin to hum and I did not want Jessica to hear the news on the phone. I called her best friends and they promised to take care of it. Later Liliana, Martina and Hannah called to reassure me that they had gone straight to Jessica's workplace, told the boss that Jess had lost her boyfriend

and needed immediate temporary leave. “Don't worry. We will stay by her night and day. She will not be alone, not for a minute.”

I was also concerned about Adam, Danny's tenderhearted soul mate. I was assured that the guys would go to his city farm and tell him in person and take him away.

I realized that the group of friends knew exactly how to take care of each other in shock and grief. “Unfortunately we have had a lot of practice,” said Walt with tears in his eyes, and I remembered Blain.

## Chapter 24: Butterflies and Birds

*Birds don't look at you...*

Strange things began to happen a week after Daniel's memorial.

I was up the avenue with Shmutty on our afternoon walk. As we passed a lush corner garden I became aware of a light touch on my arm and looked down to see a butterfly, wings poised upwards, delicately clasping my upper arm. It rested in the little sink where the deltoid muscle curves inwards. I felt the old familiar prickling sensation down my spine.

“Why would you come over here,” I said to my new friend, “when the goodies are over there?” I looked over the low fence at the garden burgeoning with butterfly appeal. The butterfly did not answer but rode with me to the end of the block and then took off. I thought the little creature would dart across to friends and family busy in the garden, but something said, “Look up.”

The butterfly was swirling, spiraling upwards into the blue, looking for all the world like a swallow or a lark.

“This could be pure fantasy,” I told Shmutt, “but I swear that butterfly is jubilant.”

Shmutty was not particularly interested and began to pull towards home and dinner, so we set off. A few steps along the way I looked down at my arm and froze in my tracks. A conversation with Daniel about tattoos came back to me. I had told him that if I ever got a tattoo it would be a butterfly and it would be placed right there in the same little sink on my upper arm where the butterfly had just perched.

I gazed down at my arm and memories of Danny's spooky side rippled down my spine. I found myself in two



minds. And the two minds were at odds. The Skeptic dismissed the incident as charming coincidence. The other part, for want of a better word I will call Mystic, maybe wanna be Mystic, was awestruck. Over the next day I noticed that whether Skeptic or Mystic held sway, every time I remembered the butterfly I quite involuntarily smiled.

If the butterfly was whimsical, gentle intrigue, the next visit was dramatic. I was crouched, weeding the raised bed in the garden that Danny and I had designed with K's rocks. My nieces and nephews were sitting behind me. I was suddenly aware that something had rested on my shoulder and assuming it was one of the family come to offer comfort, I raised my hand to cover it. But the visiting hand had wings and flapped off over the garden wall. I turned around and six faces looked at me stunned.

“Did you see that?”

“It was a robin.”

“It just appeared out of nowhere.”

“Headed straight for you and landed on your shoulder.”

“I have never seen or heard of such a thing.”

“This is awesome!”

I remember thinking, “If this is you Danny, and truly it does feel like your style, you are quite the show-off. Please do more.”

Danny was happy to oblige.

The next afternoon I was sitting on the balcony looking out over the garden and a robin appeared on top of the wall.

“Ok, hello again,” I greeted, “now if that's you Danny Boy, look at me.”

The robin took three steps along the wall. “Guess it's not Danny.” I was disappointed. But then the robin stopped, turned to face me and looked straight at me. I was stunned but still unconvinced. The robin took three more steps along the wall, stopped, turned and looked at me again. And just in case I needed further persuasion, for the third time he took his three steps and turned to look me in the eye again. I don't know how long the robin would have held his gaze because I lost mine and retreated inside in a mild state of shock. “Birds don't look at you, birds don't look at you, birds don't look at you.....”

Skeptic was on the retreat. Mystic was jubilant, but I continued to ping pong between doubt and belief.