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SHINING LIGHT
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Londa burst into the kitchen like an exploding bombshell. Dropping her armload of heavy books on to the counter top she said excitedly, "Guess what, Mother? Mrs. Twigsbury wants me to teach Babs piano. Imagine! me, teaching a Twigsbury child!"

"Incredulous!" seventeen-year-old Randy exclaimed on his way to the garage, his mouth agape and his blue-blue eyes a mixture of pride and an "I-can-scarcely-believe it" look in them.

Mrs. Cornish dropped the potato she was peeling. "Really?" she said, holding the paring knife between her thumb and index finger and surveying her sixteen-year-old with motherly pride. "How did the Twigsburys know you played the piano and gave lessons?" she asked suddenly.

"I haven't the slightest idea," Londa replied, throwing her arms wide in mock exasperation; "but I know I'm thrilled about it. Imagine, \$3.00 per half hour!"

Randy spun around so fast that he almost tripped and fell over one of the scatter rugs on the floor. "Three dollars!" he repeated, ending the exclamation with a long, shrill whistle.

"Mrs. Twigsbury said that's what she paid the other music teacher before she retired and that she'd give me the same. I wish I could get a few more pupils at that price; I wouldn't need to baby-sit at all then."

Randy sat down on one of the kitchen chairs and stretched his long, lanky legs out before him, scratching his head in pensive thought. Snapping his fingers he jumped to his feet. "I've got it!" he all but shouted. "I know where the Twigsburys heard you. . . ."

Londa looked a bit confused. "Where?" she asked quickly, "Like Mother, I wondered how they knew I played the piano, let alone taught it."

"Remember the school concert. . .?"

Londa nodded in the affirmative. "But that was back in September, Randy," she said.

"Exactly. Well, you were super-superb, breezing through the difficult selections like they were mere primary exercise pieces and having encores after each rendition. Remember?"

"It was an exciting time," Londa said humbly.

"Well, Mrs. Twigsbury was there that night. In fact, the entire family attended. I saw them. She no doubt made inquiry about your qualifications for teaching. . . ."

"You may be sure of that," the girl replied. "The Twigsburys are known for their fastidiousness and . . ."

"Their wealth," Randy said, breaking into Londa's unfinished sentence. "And I'm proud of you, Sis. You do an excellent job, both at playing the piano and teaching it. Reports do sift back to Mom and Dad and the rest of us," he added by way of explanation.

"It's a bit scary," Londa confessed. "But exciting, too. I give Babs her first lesson this Friday, after school. It's working out beautifully since I don't baby-sit for the Liddells until 6:45."

"Well, if anybody can do it, you can, Sis," Randy said confidently. "You're great on those ivories."

"But being 'great' on the ivories and teaching a Twigsbury child are two distinctly-different things, Randall David Cornish," Londa teased. "It's like you, making all those fantastic runs on the saxophone -- your fingers moving like beetles running a race -- then trying to teach, say Bobby Jones, how to do it."

"I concede defeat," Randy said, shaking his head and waving his arms frantically in mock surrender before starting for the garage where his father and he had a thriving business of cabinet making. "Imagine being classified with insects," he added, hurrying away, his mouth wearing a wide grin.

Londa gathered her books together then went to her bedroom where she deposited them on a desk and changed her clothes. In a little while she was back in the kitchen, helping with the preparation of the evening meal.

"I'm convinced that the Lord is concerned with even the most trivial seeming things of our life," she told her mother as she slipped the seasoned, floured round steak gently into the hot grease in the skillet.

"How's that?" Mrs. Cornish asked, wanting to hear her daughter's answer for the assertion.

"Well, ever since I surrendered every single part of me to Him -- body, soul, mind, spirit and strength -- the Lord has blessed me beyond all human comprehension. Studying is easier and far more enjoyable -- I tell Him that I'm trying to do my very best for Him, and His cause; and witnessing for Him has become a pure delight and joy. Remember how difficult it was for me to pass out tracts on the street corner? Well, that's in the past; passing out tracts is now one of my greatest delights. And, Mother, do you know how I feel? What I believe about this new assignment at the Twigsbury house?"

"What, dear?"

"I believe that God was in it all. He needs a light -- maybe I'll be a candle -- to shine in that wealthy, sin-darkened home."

Friday came and Londa, dressed in her school clothes, presented herself at the Twigsbury's fashionable and impressive looking house. Babs answered the doorbell. The two appraised each other for a brief moment.

"Hi!" Londa said, smiling down upon the delicate, dainty looking nine-year-old girl. "You must be Babs."

A broad smile lighted up the child's pretty face. "I am Babs," she said. "You must be Londa. Come in; Mother said you'd be here at 4:00 p.m. Frankly, I'm glad you're young," the little girl said. "It was perfectly boring for me, having Mrs. Lounsberry in every week. She was a good woman but she should have retired ages ago."

Londa stared at the girl. She was beyond her years, she concluded finally; Babs spoke like a well-matured adult.

"Well, let's begin!" the child exclaimed, taking Londa's hand in her small one and leading the way into the mammoth drawing room where, among other pieces of expensive and fine furniture, was the most gorgeous grand piano Londa had ever laid eyes on.

"You like the piano." Bab's sentence was more a statement than a question.

"It . . . it's beautiful!" Londa answered in what was little more than a whisper. "So beautiful."

Babs was pleased and delighted. "Play it," she said quickly.

Sliding on to the highly polished bench, Londa's fingers moved across the keys easily and naturally. The instrument sounded clear as a bell and sweet as an angel's song, she thought.

"Um-m, you play beautifully," Babs commented, looking at Londa with deep admiration. "What is the name of the song you're playing?"

"One of my favorites, honey: Jesus, Lover of My Soul."

"It's beautiful. Perhaps someday you will teach it to me?" The enormous blue eyes were pleading.

"I would love to do that, Babs. But hadn't we better begin with your music lesson?" Londa asked.

"Just one more song, Londa. Please; one more."

"All right, but no more after this one until you've had your music lesson."

"It won't matter; Mother's not here to know if I did or didn't have my lesson. She's at one of her many bridge parties again. Katie and I are alone, and I like it this way. Katie's the maid," she added by way of explanation.

Finishing the song, Londa moved off the bench and motioned for her charge to take the seat she had just vacated.

"Just one more?" Babs pleaded, holding up a provocative index finger. "You don't need to worry. Mother will never find out. I won't tell."

"No, Babs, it's your turn now. I was hired to teach you. Your mother trusts me, or she wouldn't have asked me to teach you. Then another thing: I am a Christian, and since I love the Lord Jesus very deeply and dearly, I must fulfill my part of the contract lest I grieve Him. You see, honey, God sees everything we do and He hears every single thing we say, too."

"God?"

"Yes, God."

"Oh!" There was a sustained pause, then the child said, "He's so vague around here that I had forgotten all about Him. Once (long ago it was) I had a great-aunt who taught me about Him. I tried hard to be good then but after she died I forgot all about Him."

"Then I shall have to tell you about Him when your piano lessons are finished. Jesus, plus piano, will make a beautiful duo, Babs," Londa said, speaking adult language to the intelligent child.

"It sounds fascinating. By all means, you must teach me. I'm quite an avid learner . . ."

"As I can see, and am aware of!" Londa exclaimed, beginning the music lesson.

The weeks slipped into months, and for teacher and pupil the highlight of each week was the Friday afternoon music lesson -- and Bible lesson. Babs was indeed an avid and quick learner. One thing alone troubled Londa - the child's inability (if such it was) to see her need of the Savior.

One crisply-cold day in November Londa received a message from Katie. "You must go to the hospital immediately," the maid said urgently. "Babs is calling for you."

"Hospital? Babs?"

"She's critically ill; her parents are frantic with worry. She's calling for you."

"I'll go, Katie! Right now."

Arriving at the hospital, Londa went immediately to the child's room.

"You've come, Londa!" Babs cried weakly as her small hand reached out and found that of her music teacher's. "I want to know Jesus the way you know Him," she said while tears flowed down her pale cheeks.

"Remember the memory verse I taught you on Friday after your music lesson was finished: 'If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness,' I John 1:9."

"I remember: and I tried it, Londa. But . . . I . . . I'm afraid to die. I . . . I don't have the peace of which you told me in my heart. Please, will you pray for me? Tell Jesus that I want Him to come into my heart. Please, Londa?"

Bending over the delicate form on the bed, Londa said softly, "I'll pray, Babs honey, and while I'm praying I want you to invite the Lord Jesus to come into your heart. Don't doubt when you ask, but believe. You can trust Jesus completely: He always does what He says He'll do."

With bowed head, a broken heart and flowing tears, Londa prayed for the salvation of her pupil. On the opposite side of the bed, weeping brokenly and unashamedly, stood the parents, anxious lines showing on their faces.

Quite suddenly Babs called out, "It's all right, Londa. Everything's all right: Jesus saved me. I'm not afraid anymore. Oh, His peace is wonderful. Wonderful. There's a light in the valley now. It's leading . . . me . . . across. Goodbye, Mother: goodbye, Father! Londa . . . I'll . . . meet . . . you . . . when . . . you . . . come . . . Home. Goodbye . . . all. . . ."

For a long while after the nurse had led the broken-hearted parents from the room. Londa remained with them, speaking words of consolation to them and telling them that they could meet their daughter in Heaven if they made adequate preparation.

"You must come over and tell us more," Mr. Twigsbury said before Londa left for home.

Crawling between the fresh-smelling sheets on her bed, Londa was glad for the saving grace and the sanctifying power of God that gave her courage to be a faithful witness for her Lord and Savior. The Christian was indeed a "shining light."

Praying for the Twigsburys, as her promise to speak to them burned on her heart, Londa fell asleep.