

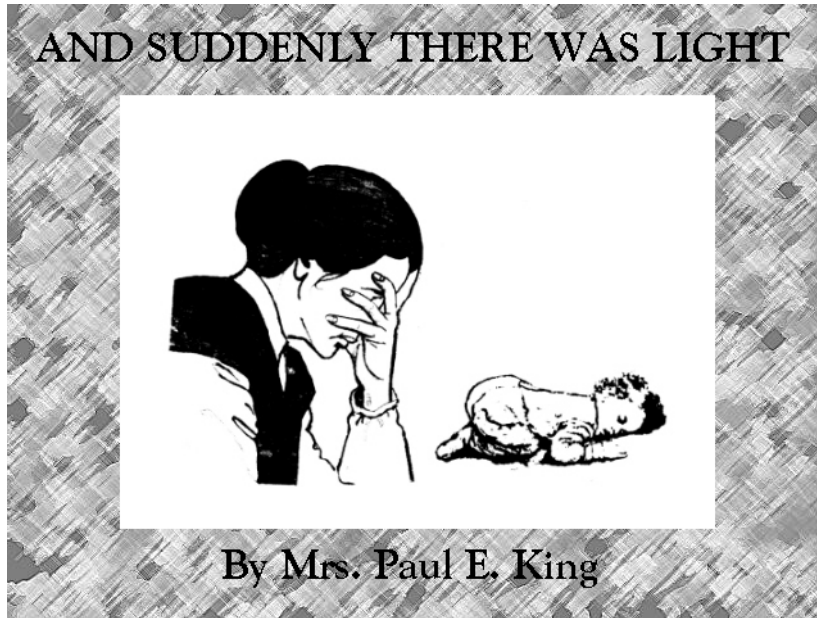
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**AND SUDDENLY THERE WAS LIGHT**  
**By Mrs. Paul E. King**

Linda sat in the rocking chair on the front porch, rocking Bobby gently back and forth. With a look of motherly pride, she drew him more closely to her bosom.

"How tiny you are!" She crooned softly, "And how sweet! You're all I have till your daddy comes home. Oh, this dreadful war!" She sighed then, a long painful sigh. Where was Bob at this moment? she wondered.

Linda followed the proceedings of the war as relayed via news media with great concern and no little interest. Her Robert was over there.

She remembered her first date with him.

Spring walked down the valley. Wherever she stepped, the wild yellow dogtooth violet bloomed and the wood anemones opened fragile white petals to her.

Everywhere she went, whatever she did, she could smell spring. Feel it, too; for with Robert Morrison coming into her life her heart experienced a perpetual springtime. Nor was she ignorant of the symptoms. She recognized them immediately . . . she was in love. Her heart was in love! Helplessly, hopelessly but blissfully happy, in love!

Ten months to the day, after Robert began courting her, he took her as his bride to the new home he had built for her. Never had anything seemed more perfect nor more wonderful than their marriage.

Two blissful years of uninterrupted happiness and love were shared together. It was too perfect . . . too good to last, Linda thought.

Many of Bob's friends and acquaintances had long since been drafted or enlisted and gone off to serve their country. The horror of it all hung like a sinister shadow over Robert and Linda's heads. Still they dreamed on, thankful for time together. Then tiny Bobby came along. What a perfect climax and fulfillment of love! Their already happy hearts were overjoyed.

"It can't last, Bob!" Linda exclaimed one evening at the supper table as she fed Bobby his first meal of strained vegetables. "It won't last." Great tears shone in her deep blue eyes.

Reaching across the table and finding Linda's hand, Bob said softly, "Keep your fingers crossed, honey." He caressed her fingers tenderly.

"We're just lucky, that's all," Linda said.

Bob was silent for a long time. After a while he spoke. "Mother wouldn't call it luck," he said, sobering suddenly. "She'd call it Providence; the mercy and goodness of God, or some such thing."

Linda stared at the table. When she spoke her voice sounded small and far away. "Perhaps your mother's right, Bob. We. . . we . . . should do something. . . ."

"About what? Or like what?"

"About our souls," Linda said frankly. "God's been good to us. Too good, really, for the way we've treated Him."

"What do you mean by that? We're not doing anything bad."

"I . . . I . . . well, it's just that your mother's right, Bob."

"We'll have plenty of time to do something about our souls later on, honey. We're young. Just starting out in life."

"And wouldn't it be wonderful to start our home like your father and mother started theirs, Bob? It's a solid foundation, for sure. You . . . you were privileged and blest, honey . . . to have been reared in the kind of home you were." Linda pressed his fingers gently to her lips.

The next day Bob's notification came. He was inducted into the Army.

From the moment he left her, Linda's life was suddenly empty, restless and vacant. At evening, she found herself waiting, listening for a familiar footstep to come up on the porch; and many times a night she called his name in her sleep. Her one and only source of comfort and consolation came from Bobby.

Winter came swiftly on the heels of Bob's departure. How long the nights were and how lonely. It shut the door on day in late afternoon and seemed to put time to sleep.

It was on a bitter cold day of the year. Bobby was tucked safely in his little bed for his afternoon nap. Deciding that a brief rest for herself might not

be a bad idea, Linda settled down with a good book and turned the local Christian radio station on. The sweet old hymns and the soft music playing gospel songs had a way of soothing her nerves and easing life's tensions. It seemed to bring a soothing balm to her aching, sorrowing heart.

"And now for the news!" The announcer's voice was clear and deep and smooth, but definitely impersonal.

Linda's thoughts were deeply embedded and entrenched in the book she was reading. To her, the news was totally unrelated and abstract. Not until the announcer's cutting statement, "And Company 'G' was totally destroyed . . ." did the news have any relevance.

Like one awaking from a horrifying nightmare, she sat up abruptly. Her face paled. Her hands flew to her throat. She felt like she was suffocating.

"They put up a brave fight," the impersonal voice continued. "They fought valiantly and . . ."

No! NO! Don't say it! Don't say it! Don't say it!" Linda wailed, turning the voice off completely as though that would change things.

"How can you say it so . . . so . . . unconcerned?" she wailed, pacing back and forth. "It means nothing to you. Nothing at all. Oh, my Bob. My Bob!"

Tears refused to come. For a long time she stood in the living room staring through the window, not seeing. The snow came down in a blinding fury of blizzard. She saw it not. The driveway had long since been drifted shut. She took no notice. The bright cardinals, gregarious sparrows and saucy blue jays and tufted titmouse which she fed so faithfully and tender so carefully, twittered and flitted in the trees and bushes beyond the big window, but their twittering and chattering and scolding only seemed to fall on deaf ears and unseeing eyes. She was far away . . . with Company 'G' on Hamburger Hill . . . and Bob!

The loud jangle of the telephone jarred her out of the shock.

Like a giant mechanical toy, she walked to the phone and picked up the receiver.

"Linda! Oh, my darling girl! We heard the news." It was Bob's mother. She was crying. "Dad and I'll be over just as soon as we can get through this blizzard. Pray, dear Linda. Look to Jesus He'll help you through. Turn to Him with all of your heart. Let Him sustain you."

Linda's breathing was heavy and labored.

"Can you hear me, Linda? Mrs. Morriston asked when there was no answer. "Are you all right? Pray, Linda," again the kind voice encouraged, pleaded.

"Look to God, you say! I . . . I . . . hate God! I hate Him! Oh-h-h. . . ."

"Linda," the kind voice pleaded, "He doeth all things well dear. He's your only hope."

"How dare you say that? He hates me! He took my father and mother when I was only eight and . . . and . . . now . . . Bob . . .!"

Without further words, she banged the receiver back in place and hurried in to the nursery where Bobby lay sleeping.

Over his small form, the tears came. "Fatherless?" she exclaimed. "Oh, my dear little son . . . fatherless!"

The child slept unmoved and unmolested. A smile, touched and incited it seemed by angels, played peacefully across his full round face.

"I wish I knew your peace, little one!" she exclaimed between her tears. Taking one of his fat little hands in her own, she pressed it tenderly to her lips. "My baby! My fatherless baby!" she cried.

Mother Morriston called near the hour of ten, stating that it was impossible to get through.

All night long the wind moaned and wailed around the house. It only added to Linda's suffering and misery. Back and forth she paced. Back and forth . . . alone, in her sorrow.

By morning, her nerves were on edge. Her eyes were red and swollen from weeping and lack of sleep and her heart felt like it had burst from its weight of sorrow and heaviness. To make matters worse, Bobby was running a high fever and had developed a nasty persistent cough through the night.

Nearly frantic with fear and anxiety, Linda called Doctor Roberson.

"I'll be out as soon as I can get through," he informed her. "The roads are all drifted shut. Not a clear one for miles and miles around. Traffic's at a standstill."

"But, Doctor, my baby . . .!"

"I know, Mrs. Morriston. I'll be there as soon as the snow plow opens the road. They keep drifting shut as fast as the plows open them. I'll call the highway department and tell them it's urgent."

It was nearly eight that night when Doctor Roberson knocked on the door.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "I couldn't get here sooner. Where is the boy?"

"The boy has pneumonia," the doctor said, after a brief checkup. "A bad case, too," he added, shaking his head sadly. "And there's no way of getting him to the hospital. I walked nearly a quarter of a mile to get here. He'd die for sure if we took him out in this storm."

Linda's face went ashen white. She felt suddenly weak and faint. "NO! No!" she exclaimed in a loud moan. "It . . . can't be!"

"This is no time to feel sorry for yourself," the doctor scolded. "Pull yourself together and fight . . . for the boy's life! Now listen carefully and follow my instructions to the minute detail. . . ."

Twenty-five minutes later Doctor Roberson stood at the door ready to leave. "You know God, I presume, like your father and mother-in-law do? Pray to Him. It looks like He's the only one who can save your little son." Pulling his hat far down on his head, he made a hasty exit.

Mrs. Morriston called just then.

"Oh, Linda," the motherly voice pleaded, "pray! God is so merciful. He is all-powerful and He is able to heal."

"He . . . He hates me!" It was an exclamation for help this time. Mrs. Morriston detected it immediately. "Why would He be punishing me like He is if He didn't hate me?" the young mother asked pitifully into the phone.

"He loves you, Linda. He's trying to get to your heart. So long you and Robert have kept him standing outside."

At mention of Bob, Linda's tears flowed freely. "Oh, Mother," she began, as a sudden thought struck her full force in her heart. "What if . . . where is . . . Bob? His soul, I mean? He wasn't saved when he left home and . . ."

"This I cannot answer. But I know that God is faithful to the souls of men. He was faithful to Bob. Furthermore, Linda, you have had no word of confirmation that Bob is dead. Let us continue to hope and pray."

A sigh escaped Linda. Yes, she could hope! Mother Morriston was talking again.

"God is dealing with you, dear. He asks for your heart. What are you going to do about it? Will you ask Him to come into your heart to live and rule and reign? Bobby needs a Christian mother more than anything else in this world."

Linda said nothing. Silent tears of deep contrition rolled unceasingly down her pretty face. Mother Morriston was a wonderful woman. She spoke the truth.

The aged woman on the other end of the line continued softly, "How many times we have stood at the grave of our hopes. The silent tear of disappointment has run down our cheeks. Like the two on the Emmaus road we have been dismayed; no, overwhelmed, at the turn of events. Then the Lord drew near and we were reminded that what He is doing we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

"The Christian passes down into the valley, but praise God, never into the pit. The valley has an ending and an exit. And by prayer the valley of the death of our joy and hopes becomes a morning of light. Light displaces darkness. The Christian way is a wonderful way, dear Linda. If only you would taste; you would then see that the Lord is good."

"I told Bob that I'd like to be saved," Linda sobbed into the phone "I'd like our home to be built on the same solid foundation that yours and Dad's has been built upon."

"And it will be, Linda, if you'll do something about it this very hour. You see, man proposes, but God disposes and deposes. We have planned, but how often our plans lie wrecked on the reefs of disheartenings. How downcast we have felt as we sat amidst their ruins! Like Job, our sorrows have made us dumb. Then God has taken the shattered pieces and in His great jigsaw, has reconstructed them in such a way that our plans and hopes and joy have been all the better for the shattering. If only you could see this, Linda, and believe."

"I . . . I . . . do believe, Mother!" Linda said.

"Then will you pray and ask Jesus to come into your heart and to save your soul, dear?"

"I'll do it," the young mother sobbed into the phone. "I'll do it."

"Father and I will be praying for you. And just as soon as the roads are cleared, we'll get over."

Weeping bitterly, repentantly, Linda fell on her knees by the baby's crib. With his hot little hand pressed tightly in her own, she prayed the prayer of the sinner.

Sudden joy and peace flooded her soul. Her entire being was changed. She shouted and laughed for joy. Picking Bobby up, she danced around the room for joy. "Thank You, Lord! Thank You!" she shouted. "Oh, I am so happy!"

Her tears of joy spilled copiously down her cheeks and wet the baby's fevered brow. Over and over she kissed him, praising God all the while.

Without warning, Bobby opened his enormous blue eyes and smiled up into his mother's happy face. He cooed then, loudly and contentedly.

Linda stood suddenly still. Then it dawned on her. Bobby's fever was gone . . . completely gone. He was his normal happy self again. Bobby was healed . . . instantly healed! By the same God Who had healed a sinner's sin-sick soul!

Mother Morriston was right again. Everything that happened to her had been for her good. Everyone, at some time or other, sails through the high seas of adversity and deepest sorrow. Not forever does the craft sail in smooth waters, nor is the sky above always clear and blue. The clouds are often dark and menacing and the storms break upon us with hurricane force. We lose our sail, the rudder goes, the ballast is thrown out, the chain holding the anchor which we thought so secure, snaps, and we are at wit's end . . . and there, standing at wit's end, is God! The same God. Who makes "all things work together for good." Linda's eyes were opened wide now. She saw the tender leadings and the dealings of God and she loved Him supremely for His "all things" in her life. For suddenly, out of the darkness and gloom of despondency, He brought light!

The phone jangled noisily. With Bobby still cooing musically and softly up at her, she answered it.

"Mrs. Linda Morriston?" a voice asked. "Is this Mrs. Robert Morriston?"

"This is she." Linda was amazed at the calmness in her heart and her voice.

"I have a cablegram for you."

"Read it, please!" Linda urged.

"Am safe. Thank God! Slightly injured. In hospital. Am now a Christian. Saved two weeks ago. I love you. Bob."

"Thank God! Thank God!" was all Linda could say.

She could hardly wait to call Mother and Father Morrison. She had so much to tell them.