

## A Storm and a Prayer

By Mary Ann Koontz

The room glowed with a bright, white light that put a piercing spark in the eyes of Jeremy's stuffed animals. It lasted only a second then the room was dark again. A loud crash followed. Jeremy shivered and pulled his pillow over his ears to muffle the sound.

"I hate thunderstorms," Jeremy said. He closed his eyes tight. Trying to take a deep breath to relax, Jeremy felt his lungs work against him. He reached for his inhaler on the nightstand. Quickly he took a puff, waited, then exhaled. He could breathe easier already.

With the second puff came another flash of lightening. Jeremy gulped in more air and began coughing. Throwing his inhaler on the nightstand, he grabbed the covers and jerked them up over his head.

"Mom...Dad?" There was no answer.

Jeremy decided he would have to go to their bedroom to wake them up, but how could he do that with alligators under his bed? Although he couldn't see them, he knew the alligators were there, just waiting for him to put his foot down on the floor. Since getting to his parents' room was out of the question, Jeremy began to panic. Then his fear caused him to pray.

"Dear God, please make this thunderstorm stop. I can see why we need rain to make flowers and trees grow, but why do we need thunderstorms?"

Then an idea came to Jeremy. Maybe the lightening was how God recharged the lightening bugs. That could explain how they light up without batteries. And what was it Grandpa once told him about thunder? It was something about angels bowling. Of course! Rainy days are perfect days for bowling, and the loud claps of thunder must mean one of the angels bowled a strike.

Jeremy liked these explanations. He imagined watching the lightening bugs signal to one another in his yard. He would follow one of those tiny beams of light until he caught it. And when the bug tickled his skin inside his fist, he would spread the palm of his hand wide open, watch it fan its wings, and fly away.

Jeremy drifted off to sleep dreaming. He dreamed of catching lightening bugs that glowed in his hand. He dreamed of angels, so light on their feet carrying heavy bowling balls and keeping score with the stars. In the morning, Jeremy awoke with the warm sun on his face.

“Good morning, son.” Jeremy’s dad walked into the room and tousled Jeremy’s blond hair. “That was some storm we had last night. I thought you would get scared and come in our room, but I guess you’re too big for that now.”

Jeremy’s dad moved toward the window and looked out. “Come look at this, Jeremy.”

Jeremy crawled out of bed. He crossed the room and pressed his nose against the glass. A soft rain was coming down through the sunshine, and making a bridge across the sky was a rainbow.

“Wow!” Jeremy exclaimed. “Are you thinking what I’m thinking?”

“I doubt it,” his dad replied, then added, “just what are you thinking?”

“Well, God must be tired from recharging all those lightening bugs, and the angels must be tired from bowling, so I figure they decide to relax and do some painting; you know, try out their new watercolors. They paint a nice picture, don’t they Dad?”

His dad stopped rubbing his forehead and smiled. “They sure do,” he said with a hug. “And it takes a special person to notice.”