
The Letters

By Sean Hanzelik

Book One

Fourteen Years Ago

*“And we know that in all things God works
for the good of those who love Him. . .”*

-- Romans 8:28

Chapter One

Jonah Trotter was sitting next to Wallace Cauffman at the lunch table. Andrew McBride was sitting across from them. The rest of Mrs. Peters's third-grade class was further down the table, scattered into little friend-clusters. Three boys here, four girls there, a pair of boys further down, and so on and so on. Group after group, down the line, sticking together like they had been quarantined from sitting anywhere near the other children.

Jonah, Wallace, and Andrew had become best friends the previous year in second grade. The first day of class, they were assigned seats at the same six-child station and instantaneously bonded.

Jonah was the quiet and shy one. Wallace was a little more rambunctious and the trio's leader, and Andrew was somewhere in the middle. Andrew got the best grades while Jonah struggled but did fairly well despite a few learning deficiencies. Wallace simply didn't try because he really didn't have to. He got bored easily and occupied his time and mind by being the class clown. He did average work, at best, with little to no effort. He was by

far the brightest of the three and could easily have gotten straight A's had he pushed himself even slightly.

Jonah hadn't said much all day, but neither of the other two boys really noticed. He was about halfway finished with the bologna and cheese sandwich his mom packed for him when he set it down and looked at his two friends.

"I saw God this morning," he said.

The other two boys heard him but weren't sure what he meant or really even what he said.

"He was in my living room," Jonah added.

"God?" Wallace questioned.

"Like the real God?" Andrew asked.

"The real God," Jonah answered. "He was in my living room."

"How did you see God?" Wallace asked.

Jonah had been wondering the very same thing. He didn't really remember how it happened. He knew his mom had been downstairs making breakfast like she did almost every morning. She called for him to come eat, and he had walked down the stairs. Something made him turn right toward the living room instead of left toward the kitchen.

"What did he look like?" Andrew asked.

"Light," Jonah answered.

"Light?" Wallace questioned.

"Bright light. Almost too bright to look at."

When Jonah had reached the bottom of the stairs, there was a slight humming sound, and he had been drawn to it. He remembered seeing the light reflecting off the walls in the hallway, bouncing out from the living room.

He turned the corner to walk into the living room and stopped dead in his tracks. He just stared into the light. It was God. He didn't know how he knew; he just knew. God was in his living room, and Jonah had seen him.

When he walked into the kitchen, a huge smile was plastered to his face. His mom had had her back to him while she finished up the fried eggs on the stove. He sat down at the table, smile never fading, and waited patiently for his breakfast.

"You got your homework?" she asked, still not looking at him.

"I didn't have any, Mom."

She was concentrating on the food and didn't really hear him anyway. She finished the eggs, put them on a plate, dropped a few pieces of toast on the plate, and turned around to hand it to her son.

"What's wrong with you?" she asked.

"Nothing, Mom."

"Why do you have that goofy grin on your face?"

"Just happy, I guess."

"Jonah, you're never happy in the morning. Unless it's Saturday."

"I am today," he said.

"Just eat your eggs. Bus gets here in ten minutes."

Every single morning, Jonah left through the kitchen door in the back of the house. He always grabbed his lunch from his mom, kissed her good-bye, and always, always said, "I love you, Mom."

That was the highlight of Susan Trotter's day.

Jonah would then walk across their small back deck, down the three wooden steps, along the back sidewalk, and out the gate in their privacy fence. The bus stop was down the street on the corner of Palmetto Drive, the main street in the neighborhood, and Laurel Lane, the street they lived on.

This particular morning, the pattern veered only slightly from the norm. After Jonah grabbed his lunch from his mom, she bent down, and he kissed her. She then told him that she loved him, but instead of his normal response, he looked at her and said, "God is in our living room."

He then turned and walked across the deck, down the steps, along the sidewalk, and out the gate.

Susan Trotter stood watching him. She didn't think he really meant God was in the living room, although she wasn't sure what he meant or why he said it.

After closing the kitchen door, Susan proceeded to clean up, wiping the toast crumbs off the table, rinsing dishes and glasses and putting them in the dishwasher, cleaning the frying pan and letting it air dry, and emptying the kitchen garbage can. She finished her cup of coffee and walked out of the kitchen.

As she turned to head up the stairs, she stopped as she remembered what Jonah had said.

"God is in our living room."

She walked down the short hallway to the doorway of the living room and looked in. Nothing. If God was in there, He looked a lot like a couch or coffee table, she thought.

She shook her head and chuckled a tiny bit at the absurdity of her son's comment before heading up the stairs to get ready for work.

"God is in our living room."

† † †

Susan and Jonah Trotter had been living by themselves in the house on Laurel Lane for a little over three months. Andy, Susan's husband and Jonah's father, had moved out after coming home one evening from work to tell her he was in love with someone else. He wouldn't say who it was, only that it didn't matter, but she had instinctively known it was his secretary, Tina Sherman.

Andy was the President of the Commercial Banking Division of *Santa Rosa Bank*, a local southern California bank, and his reputation was his pride and joy. People knew him as an honest and caring family man. He was a man people felt they could trust, and he took great pride in that fact.

Susan wasn't positive it was Tina, but Andy often took her with him out of town on business. They often had late dinners "to discuss business," and they even exchanged birthday and Christmas gifts that to Susan seemed a bit extravagant. She was pretty sure she was losing out to the secretary, and she was going to play that card if necessary if and when the question of custody came up down the road. She was not above playing Andy's reputation against his fighting for Jonah.

She wanted her son to see his father as much as possible, but she wanted to be the one to make that call, not the other way around. Andy was the one who messed up, and he was going to play by her rules.

When he approached her to tell her he was leaving, there wasn't much said on his part, other than that he was sorry, that he hadn't intended for it to happen, and that he had no other

choice. Supposedly, her husband of ten years couldn't go on living with her when he loved someone else.

"I love you, Susan," he had said. "I'm just not in love with you."

She almost wanted to puke when he said it. Not because she was hurt, which she was, but because it was the oldest cliché in the book.

"We're just different people," he continued.

Her stomach really churned with that one.

"I'd like to still be friends."

That was the clincher. As the word "friends" came out of his mouth, what little supper she had eaten came out of hers and splattered in his lap.

It wasn't the proudest moment in her thirty-one years of life, but it was probably the most satisfying. She looked up at him, muttered a measly "sorry", and then started laughing. He just sat and watched, thinking she had lost her mind.

She laughed for a good five minutes, and he eventually just walked out.

"Crazy woman," she heard him say before he closed the door.

The moment the door shut behind him, her laughter changed to tears.

It was with this thought that she closed the front door to her home as she headed to work. In most respects it saddened her, but at the same time, she had to chuckle. Life throws us a curve every now and then, she mused, shaking her head and smiling slightly.

Little did she know she was about to receive one of the biggest of her life.

Chapter Two

The envelope was resting right in the middle of Susan Trotter's desk when she arrived back at work after lunch.

It was just after 12:15 p.m. when she walked back into her office. Ever since *APEC Industries* had opened its doors, lunch hour always ran from 11:20 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. The company's founder, Merle Grogan, thought it was a good way to cut back on extra long lunch hours. If his employees got to their lunch establishments at 11:30, they'd beat the vast majority of the crowd, thus making their entire dining experience quicker, allowing them to be back at work earlier.

The Friday afternoon sales meeting always started at 12:30. She had about ten minutes before she had to be down the hall in the conference room.

She walked in, put her purse in the filing cabinet behind her desk, and sat down in her chair. She picked up the envelope, wondering what it was. Plain-white, unaddressed, and sealed.

She grabbed one of the company letter openers from inside her top drawer and sliced it through the envelope flap. Inside was a single sheet of paper containing a typed note.

Dear Susan,

Go get your son from school. I look forward to speaking to you in the future.

God

She sat quiet for a moment and read and reread the letter a few times.

"Get my son from school?" she said to herself. "What is this?"

At that moment, Jack Purdy, one of her co-workers, poked his head into her office.

"Susan, meeting is starting in five."

She didn't look up.

"Susan," he repeated, trying to get her attention.

"Do you know what this is?" she said, looking up and holding the note up to him.

"Meeting," he said, ignoring her question. "In five."

"I'll be there in a second."

He ducked out, and she picked up the phone and dialed Jonah's school, her heart starting to race.

"*Hilldale Elementary*," the receptionist answered.

"Yes, this is Susan Trotter, Jonah's mother. He's in Mrs. Peters's class. Does he need me to pick him up?"

"One second," the receptionist said.

Susan heard her set the phone down and could hear voices in the background. Sounded like sick kids, teachers, and others crowded into the small, school office.

"I don't believe he's in here to be picked up," the receptionist said when she returned to the phone.

"I received a note telling me to pick him up."

"A note? Who was the note from, Mrs. Trotter?"

Susan looked back down at the note in her hands. She quickly reread it before answering.

"Never mind," she said. "Is there any way you can go to his class to see if he needs me to come get him?"

"I can ring down there. There's a phone in the room. One second."

Again, she heard the receptionist set the phone down and heard her voice in the background. It was clear that Mrs. Peters didn't know why Jonah would need to be picked up. Neither did Jonah. He was fine.

"He seems to be fine, Mrs. Trotter. Is everything okay?"

She looked back down at the note again and was perplexed.

"It seems so. I'm sorry for bothering you. Thanks for your time."

They both hung up, and Susan sat for a moment staring at the letter. Her son's statement that morning never entered her mind.

"God is in our living room."

She made no connection between it and the letter.

Jack Purdy poked his head back in. "Meeting's starting," he said and disappeared around the corner.

Susan shook her head, grabbed a yellow legal pad out of her desk drawer, put the envelope and letter into the same drawer, and headed to the meeting.

The meeting lasted roughly an hour, an hour during which Susan could think of nothing but her son's safety.

She didn't stand around and chit-chat after the meeting like normal. She was out the door and down the hallway to her office before anybody else really even stood up.

She moved quickly around her desk, threw down the legal pad, on which she had written nothing, and opened her desk drawer. She expected to see the opened envelope and the note. She didn't. Instead, a new, unopened envelope was in its place. Again, plain-white. No name or address on it. Sealed.

"What is going on here?" she asked out loud and reached in and grabbed it.

She hurriedly slid her finger under the flap and ripped it open. Again, it contained a single sheet of paper.

Dear Susan,

*I was in your living room this morning.
It is now time to go get your son from
school.*

God

† † †

She looked at the clock. It was 1:45. Jonah got out of school at 3:10 and would be expecting to catch the bus immediately after the last bell.

She could be at the school in about twenty-five minutes but had one piece of business to complete before she left. She figured it would take about forty-five minutes to complete and realized this would get her to the school maybe ten to fifteen minutes before it ended. Plenty of time to get there and get Jonah before he caught the bus.

She sat for a moment, puzzling over the note in her hand.

God? Writing her letters? In her living room?

“Doesn’t make sense,” she said.

“Never does,” a voice said to her from the doorway.

She looked up, and Mark Broome, her manager, was standing there.

“You okay?” he asked. “You seemed a little distracted in the meeting.”

She instinctively looked down at the note in her hand and quickly back up at him. “I’m fine,” she said. “It’s just Jonah. I have to go get him from school.”

“Is he okay?”

“Yes. . . I think so. . . I don’t know.”

She hadn’t planned on crying, but at that moment, she started. And, she hated herself for it.

“Go get him,” Mark said.

“I’m going to finish my projections and then go.”

“You can do them Monday, Susan. If you want.”

“Thank you, but they’ll only take a few minutes,” she said. “He’s okay, really. I just need to go get him.”

“Okay. If you need anything, let me know.”

“Thanks, Mark.”

Mark walked out, and she sat for a moment. She read the letter again before folding it and putting it back into the envelope. She got up and stuffed the envelope in her purse, which was still in the filing cabinet behind her desk.

She finished her projections more quickly than she had anticipated. She printed them, hole-punched them, bound them with brads, and tucked them under her arm to give to Mark on her way out. Plenty of time to get to school; she’d probably be at least ten minutes early.

As she was walking to her car, she took her purse off her shoulder, unzipped it, and fished inside for the envelope. Nothing. It was gone.

“What the—”

She stopped in the parking lot and peered directly into her purse. The envelope would not have been easy to miss. She hadn’t folded it or put it under anything. It should have been resting right on top, but it was gone.

A sick feeling invaded her stomach as she got into her car.

Chapter Three

The accident occurred when a 1998 *Ford Taurus* pulled out in front of a 1992 *Toyota* pick-up. The driver of the *Taurus* wasn't wearing his seatbelt and was thrown across his car into the passenger door and window. The window shattered, the door bowed outward, and the driver was killed instantly.

The driver of the pick-up was wearing his seatbelt and came within inches of smashing his head directly into the steering wheel. The front end of the truck was demolished, but the driver escaped unharmed with the exception of a few minor bruises across his chest from the tightness of the seatbelt.

Susan Trotter knew nothing of the accident as she drove along. Her car radio was turned off, her hands gripped the steering wheel a tad too tightly, and she was focused on the road ahead. Yet, her mind was on nothing but the letter she had received and getting to the school to get Jonah. The sick feeling in her stomach had not dissipated at all.

She worked in Burbank but the school was in Glendale, and she was about two miles from the school when she rounded a long curve on I-5 and hit the traffic. Dead standstill.

"No," she said under her breath. "Come on. Not today."

She pulled slightly out onto the shoulder to get a glance up the road to see how far the traffic went. There was no end in sight. As far as she could tell, the traffic was backed up for miles.

"I cannot believe this."

She thought about turning around, which would require going across the grassy, undulating median, but as she mentally played over any possible alternate routes to the school, she came to the conclusion they would all take too long.

"I cannot believe this."

It became very clear, very quickly that she was not going to get to the school before Jonah caught the bus.

The entire bus route took a little over an hour. Jonah's stop was about midway, somewhere between twenty-five and thirty-five minutes into the ride.

He came out of school with Wallace Cauffman. They rode the same bus and lived not more than two miles from each other. Andrew McBride rode a different bus and lived a good twenty minutes from either of them.

Jonah had no idea his mother was even on her way to pick him up. To him, it was just an ordinary afternoon. Catch the bus, play *GameBoy* with Wallace on the ride, get home, eat a

snack, do homework, watch television, and wait for his mom to get home.

Wallace and Jonah always sat together on the bus, not quite all the way in the back, but close. The older kids always got the last few seats on both sides, but Wallace and Jonah would usually go back as far as they were allowed. Today was no exception.

As soon as they sat down, they got their *GameBoys* out of their backpacks, linked the two, and began their usual head-to-head war on their own imaginary battlefields of Gameland. All was normal until the blow-out occurred.

The right-front tire was about twelve pounds of air pressure too low, and the driver hadn't inspected it since the previous week. However, nobody ever knew for sure this was the reason the tire blew. The insurance inspector suspected low air pressure but could never prove it. He stated "accidental tire damage" in his report, which was attached to all the claims. The team assigned to the case from the police department didn't have a clue. Freak accident was basically how they worded it in their report.

When the tire blew, the bus immediately jerked to the right. A loud, collective scream filled the bus's cabin, and the driver slammed on the brakes. Without the tire, he had little to no control, and the bus turned sharply toward the right-hand shoulder. The brakes slowed it down considerably, but when it left the road, it was still traveling nearly forty miles per hour.

The shoulder wasn't terribly steep, but it was steep enough to tumble the bus onto its right side. The nose of the bus slid headlong into the uprising embankment at the bottom of the shoulder's slope. The forward impact and the sideways

approach of the bus made the back end carom forward into a tailspin that was ended abruptly as the back of the bus spun wildly into a concrete stanchion.

The seven children in the last three rows of the bus were killed instantly. Jonah and Wallace were sitting in the fourth row from the back. When the bus tipped over, the boys were pressed firmly against their windows. When the nose slammed into the embankment, they were jarred over the front of their seat, and when the back end swung around and struck the stanchion, they were slammed right into the sideways ceiling of the bus. Wallace's neck broke on impact and both his shoulders were dislocated. He also ended up with two broken legs, a shattered forearm, and three broken ribs. He was unconscious and barely breathing when they pulled him from the bus.

Jonah was one of the luckier children. His body had somehow twisted as the bus spun so that when he struck the ceiling, he struck it flat on his back. The only broken bone in his body was the thumb on his right hand. His arm jerked hard backwards when he hit the ceiling, and his hand slammed into the hard metal at full-force. His thumb absorbed the brunt of that impact.

His head was another story. As he slammed into the ceiling, his body hit and then his head jerked backwards, crashing hard into the metal. He was knocked unconscious immediately, and when they pulled him from the wreck, he was in a deep coma with bleeding on his brain.

In all, fifteen people died in the crash—fourteen children and the driver, who died when he struck the windshield on the bus's initial forward impact into the embankment. The seven children

in the very back of the bus died immediately, and the other seven died either in the hospital or on the ride to the hospital.

Wallace Cauffman was one of the ones who made it all the way to the hospital. He even made it through the first night. He remained unconscious the entire night, but he had made it. And, it appeared he was taking a turn for the better the following morning when everything changed.

Just before 7 a.m., his blood pressure dropped drastically and his breathing stopped. Mysteriously, his heart kept beating. It was fairly weak, but it was beating. It gave the doctors and nurses a glimmer of hope that lasted about ten minutes. They tried resuscitating him to no avail. His blood pressure rose ever so briefly before bottoming out, and finally, his heart gave out. They declared Wallace Cauffman dead at 7:14 Saturday morning.

Chapter Four

The traffic jam caused Susan Trotter to get to the school about forty minutes after the last bell rang. She had wrestled with the decision to just go straight home instead of going to the school first, but the image of the letter kept coming into her head as she inched forward in the traffic. If God was really sending her letters, she mused, then He might have made Jonah miss the bus. What would be the point of sending her letters to go get him and then have her get caught in traffic? It never crossed her mind that if she had left when she read the first letter, that maybe she would have made it to the school in time.

God had never been a central figure in Susan's thoughts, actions, or beliefs. She had been to church maybe seven times since she was eight years old. She remembered her family going when she was young, real young, but when her mother died of cancer, they all stopped going.

Her father had taken her mother's death very hard. He had never been that much into church anyway, but after she died, he

was angrier with God than anybody else. He certainly wasn't going to go to some church and sing praises or hear how he should worship this all-loving God who killed his wife. Wasn't happening, not in his lifetime, and Susan felt the brunt of that, although she never quite bought into his anger.

Oh, she was mad, terribly mad, but most of her anger was directed at her mother and not God. She had a hard time coming to an understanding of how someone's mother could just leave. The stomach cancer never really played into it. Susan always considered that just an excuse, a way out for her mother.

These rationalizations began to disappear as Susan got older and came more and more to terms with her mother's death. Her anger never shifted to God but neither did her thoughts or actions. God just wasn't a part of her life.

The times she went to church were with friends, who invited her. She went to be polite but was never really inclined to return.

As she pulled into the school parking lot, her heart sank. She saw a police cruiser with its lights on sitting directly in front of the building. Instantly, she knew. Something was wrong with Jonah. The knowing didn't extend any further than that, but her mind did. She envisioned a school shooting. She dismissed that quickly, realizing there would be a lot more police around if that happened. That thought was replaced by an image of Jonah lying on the lunchroom floor choking on his lunch. This too was quickly dismissed when she remembered that he was in his room doing just fine when she called from work. And, that had been after lunch.

Thought after thought ran through her head as she parked the car, yanked the keys out of the ignition, and ran to the front of the school.

She slammed through the entrance doorway and took a sharp left into the school's office. It was tiny with no children around. There were two women behind the counter, both of which Susan recognized only by their first names. Mary was on the phone; Olivia stood behind her with rapt attention. There were two police officers standing at the counter. One had a pad of paper open in his hand and appeared to be dictating to Mary on the phone.

All four of them looked up when Susan burst in.

"Jonah," Susan got out through her heavy breaths. "Jonah Trotter."

"One second, ma'am," Olivia said, "there's been an accident."

"Thirty-one children in all," the officer said, and Mary repeated the information into the phone.

"What happened?" Susan asked.

"Bus crashed," Olivia said.

"*St. Francis Hospital*," the officer said. "Seven ambulances and an airlift helicopter."

Mary repeated the information into the phone.

Susan was petrified. Her heart was pounding, and her face and body became very hot, although she was unaware of the feeling.

"What route?" she asked Olivia, who shrugged her ignorance in return.

Mary turned and covered the mouthpiece. "One second, Mrs. Trotter, I'll answer—"

Mary's sentence was interrupted by directing her attention back to whoever she was talking to on the phone. "Yes, that's correct," she said. "Route 64."

Everything in Susan Trotter's world crashed to a halt as she heard the route number. Her mind went numb, and her body collapsed to the floor. She didn't pass out, and she was still aware of everything going on around her. It all just ceased to matter.

Route 64. Jonah's route. He was dead. She knew it.

Jonah wasn't dead, but except for the slow, steady rise and fall of his chest and the beeping of the monitors, you'd never know it by looking at him. He was still in Intensive Care but had stabilized throughout the night. He was still in a coma and just lay there, peacefully sleeping. There actually even appeared to be an ever-so-slight smile on his face.

The back of his head was swollen from the impact and the rush of blood, and the left side of his face was discolored a bluish-green. Neither were causes for alarm, and the bleeding on his brain was minimal, according to the various specialists that had seen him. In fact, the majority of the cerebral bleeding had actually absorbed back into the brain, which was thought to be the reason his brain activity was recording stronger on the sensor readouts than it had been upon his being admitted. It was a phenomenon none of the doctors had ever seen before.

Susan Trotter was allowed to visit with him for thirty minutes every three hours. She was there on the dot every time her visitation time arrived. The rest of the time throughout the first night, she was in the waiting room.

She would occasionally speak with the parents of Wallace Cauffman, who she knew mostly from brief phone conversations arranging weekend sleepovers. She had seen them and talked to them briefly at school functions but never to the point where she would call them friends. To her, they were simply Wallace's parents.

It was apparent they were clinging to desperate hope for their son's recovery. And each time she went over to them, it appeared they had been crying. It wasn't a pleasant experience, and she never really knew what to say. So, she usually just asked if they had heard anything. Their response was always, "He's doing okay," or, "So far, so good," or some variation of upbeat, positive self-talk.

When they asked about Jonah in return, she felt bad telling them of Jonah's progress, although it gave her a better sense of security to think about it. She usually just said something to the effect of, "He's doing better, but still in a coma." She always felt guilty after having talked to them because she left them thankful her son was doing better than theirs. It was awful, she knew, but it gave her a sense of hope.

The 6 a.m. visitation period came with the best news of the night. Jonah had completely stabilized. Blood pressure was normal. Breathing was calm and steady. Pulse was regular. And the best news for Susan was the brain activity. It appeared there was going to be no actual brain damage, although it was still early to tell for sure. Once he awoke, they would have to do further tests to see if his motor skills, verbal skills, or cognitive processes had been affected. They hoped for the best, and based on the most recent brain scans and activity reports, it all appeared to be normal.

There was a room just inside the Intensive Care double-doors where parents were briefed before their visitation period. Two doctors and a nurse took Susan into the room to explain the recent developments. Susan simply stood in front of them and listened. As they began to talk of Jonah's progress, tears poured down her cheeks. She didn't bother to wipe them off.

The two doctors finished what they were saying, and as they were leaving the room, one of them took Susan's hand and said, "Your boy is very lucky. Very lucky."

The second doctor confirmed that, saying, "I've never seen brain recovery like that. So quick. Science amazes me all the time. A very lucky boy you have there."

The doctors left the room, and the nurse handed Susan a tissue and stood there for a moment before saying anything. "Don't listen to them."

Susan was taken aback.

"Jonah is not lucky."

"But, I—"

"God is working in your son. God healed him. God does not need luck."

Susan didn't know what to say. Her mind shot back to the image of the letters she received. She thought of Jonah saying he saw God in the living room.

"I don't—"

"Trust God," the nurse added. "Only through Him can miracles occur. Trust God."

A moment of silence passed between them before the nurse took Susan's arm in her hand. "I'll take you to see Jonah now."

† † †

Intensive Care was a strange place to visit. No rooms. It was just a wide-open space with individual stations for each of the patients. Large curtains hung from clips on sliding tracks and could be closed around the patients' beds to afford a little privacy. Jonah's curtain was partially closed as the nurse led Susan to his bedside.

When Susan saw him, she burst into tears. The emotion of the entire day came rushing out in sobs. The nurse put her arm around Susan's shoulders and pulled her close.

She cried for several minutes as the nurse comforted her. As she calmed down, the nurse asked her if she was going to be okay, to which Susan nodded.

"Trust God," the nurse whispered in Susan's ear as she backed away and closed the curtain completely around Jonah's bed.

Susan continued crying quietly as she reached and grabbed Jonah's hand. She held it tightly, lifting it to her mouth to lightly kiss.

"Jonah, I'm sorry," she said to her sleeping son. "I should have—"

She stopped abruptly when she noticed it. Sticking out from underneath the covers lying right next to her son was another envelope. Only the top was visible, but she instantly knew it was the same kind of envelope. She knew it would be plain-white, and she knew it would be sealed. She also knew that it contained a single sheet of paper and another note from God.

Her heart began beating wildly, and she let go of Jonah's hand to grab the envelope.

She thought of the nurse's voice as she slipped her finger under the flap.

"Trust God."

Her fingers were shaking as she pulled the piece of paper out of the envelope, and the nurse's voice came to her again.

"Trust God."

She held the folded piece of paper in her hands and looked at her son. Despite the bruised left side of his face, he was beautiful. His hair was all in disarray, and he looked faraway in some distant dreamland, but he was beautiful.

"Trust God."

She looked back to the paper, then to her son, staring at him intently.

"Trust," she said in a whisper, slightly shaking her head side-to-side, a single tear escaping her right eye.

She unfolded the paper and read the very short note inside.

Dear Susan,

It was a pleasure talking to you.

God