

Copyright 2001 By Lucille King
All Rights Reserved and Duplication
Of This Publication Is Forbidden,
Except For Personal Use

* * * * *

Digital Edition 09/01/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

Christian Courtesy

By Mrs. Paul E. King

From the August 30, 1981 Sunday School Beacon

The day was hot; the store was hotter still; the air was humid and muggy, and tempers were short. Kristin Bancroft, straightening the merchandise on her counters to keep them neat and orderly and attractive, wiped the perspiration from her forehead, her face all the while wearing a smile of inner contentment and peace.

"Miss! Miss," an irate customer called, holding a bath towel up for Kristin to see. "I want a matching set of these-two each of the bath and hand towels and the washcloths. And make it snappy!" she ordered curtly. "This heat's about to kill me. What's wrong with the air conditioning? A part of this uncalled-for energy crisis, eh? And the store's monopolizing on it, I dare say."



Her words came out in a brittle, barbed way and Kristin, smiling sweetly and pleasantly, replied softly and kindly, "It is hot, isn't it? I'm sorry. The air conditioning system went out several hours ago. Mr. Kelly has someone checking into it and I'm sure they're doing everything possible to get it going again. And here are your towels and washcloths. Shall I box them and gift wrap them for you? We have beautiful wrapping paper."

"Of course. Of course," came the icy rejoinder. "Why do you suppose I wanted two of each! It's for a wedding shower. But do hurry; I'm about to faint. Can't you do something about that air conditioning system? I feel like I'm going to have a heart attack. If I do, I'll sue the store; I promise I will!"

Thinking quickly and acting rapidly, Kristin hurried to where her purse was hidden beneath one of the counters and extracted her folding fan from it. "Here," she said with a smile. "Use my fan while I gift-wrap these lovely towels. You have excellent taste," she complimented pleasantly. "Peach is one of my favorite colors. We have a beautiful selection of wrapping paper," she added, pointing to samples which she lifted out of a drawer and set on the counter top. "I think this tiny-flowered peach piece would be perfect to match your towels. I could make you a large bow in a slightly deeper shade of peach. That would really look beautiful. Or this mint green would be pretty..."

The woman, studying the proffered fan for a brief moment, finally received it gratefully. Fanning herself fiercely, and totally captivated by now with Kristin's ebullient spirit and her patient attitude, she leaned over the counter and said, "I like your idea of peach wrapping paper set off with an enormous bow. You're a clever girl."

By the time Kristin had finished wrapping the towels and wash cloths her customer's attitude was completely changed. "May I leave this gift here with you while I do a bit more shopping?" she asked quickly. "And could I use your fan until I come back after the towels, please? It was so kind of you to give it to me."

"That will be fine," Kristin said pleasantly. "Use the fan as long as you need it. I'll take care of your purchase until you're ready to pick it up. Mr. Kelly's running some very good sales for his in-store customers who so graciously put up with the inconvenience and the discomfort of the temporary loss of the use of our cooling system. You'll find specials in every department, dear; ask the clerks about them."

Smiling broadly now and thanking Kristin for the bit of information, the woman hurried away, declaring that it wasn't bad at all, not with a fan to help her out.

"You should have reported her!" Jane Ross exclaimed, walking across the aisle from her counter to where Kristin was shining the glass on one of her showcases.

"You bug me!" Aletha Nunnery declared, coming over to join Jane. "Her kind makes me feel like punching them in the nose and telling them to go where they're satisfied if they don't like our service nor our line of merchandise."

"It wouldn't be very lady-like to punch some one in the nose," Kristin said, laughing softly and soothingly. "Furthermore, I have nothing within me that wants to retaliate; the 'punch in the nose' feeling has all been taken out since I got sanctified wholly. And none of us could deny the fact that it is quite muggy and uncomfortable in here. No fault of Mr. Kelly's, nor anybody else."

"I wonder how people like that woman think we enjoy working in this. They're in only so long as they want to be; us, it's an eight-hour deal." Jane's eyes snapped as she finished.

"Hopefully not," Kristin said brightly. "So far, it's been less than three hours since the air-conditioning went off. It's not nearly so noticeable if you stay busy," she added, continuing to clean the glass surfaces of her showcases.

"All that energy expended! It only makes me perspire more," Jane answered.

"Same here," Aletha agreed as she and Jane left Kristin and got into a conversation by themselves.

"She's something else!" Jane exploded to her friend. "Almost makes me sick at my stomach the way she caters to her customers."

"Mr. Kelly sure appreciates it. She's one of his pets if you ask me," Aletha remarked.

"And a favorite of his elite-friend customers, too. Look, here comes that snooty Mrs. Hamerhill. Ugh. Do I ever detest waiting on her. Talk about hard to please. ' "

"And she's coming straight to your counter, Jane. Better hurry and act like you're busy. She is Mrs. Kelly's very special friend, I hear. She just may report us if she sees us loitering out here in the aisle." With that, Aletha hurried away to her department.

Jane was fumbling in a drawer, pretending she was busy, when the well-dressed, fastidious and socially prominent banker's wife stepped up to her counter.

"I want a silk scarf to match this material," she told Jane as she laid a small piece of fabric on the counter top, her eyes wandering from scarf to scarf on display both on top of the counter and inside the glassed-in showcase.

Moving in an automated sort of way as though it were a great effort to comply with the woman's wishes and request, Jane removed a floral scarf from a standing circular display and laid it beside the bit of fabric, offering no comment or suggestions then standing back to view Mrs. Hamerhill's reaction.

"No, that will not do," the woman declared, shaking her head. Pointing to numerous scarves lying daintily and prettily beneath the glassed-in showcase, she said, "I want all of these out so I can compare them, please."

With neither a smile nor an "I'll-be-happy-to-help you," Jane lifted the colorful scarves from their glass boxes and placed them on top of the counter, wearing her dislike of the banker's wife all over her person.

Mrs. Hamerhill studied Jane for a brief moment then carried her colorful selections over to Kristin whose smile was a welcome sight.

"Here," she told Kristin, "Help me to decide which of these will best match this fabric. My seamstress finishes the dress today and I want a matching scarf to complement the garment. It's a very simple thing really, and a beautiful silk scarf will give it a bit of a 'final-touch' look. You are always so helpful."

"Thank you, Mrs. Hamerhill. I'm delighted to help you. What lovely fabric this is! I know you will have a beautiful dress. This scarf is the perfect complement," Kristin said, drawing a scarf out of the lot chosen and laying the fabric on it. "See how the scarf picks up the aqua shades? It's really a very beautiful combination -- a sort of perfectly-matched thing. Now if you desire a contrasting effect, this scarf is ideal," she advised, holding up another scarf and repeating the process of fabric and scarf laid side by side or one on the other.

Mrs. Hamerhill's eyes were alight with happiness. It was as if she had made some rare and valuable discovery. "Oh, you dear girl!" she exclaimed quickly. "You are indeed a rare and priceless find, just as the Kellys have told me many times. Thank you, Kristin, I'll take both of the scarves."

No sooner was Mrs. Hamerhill gone than a man came up to Kristin. He smiled at her; she smiled at him.

"May I help you?" she asked in her soft voice.

"You certainly may," came the pleasant sounding reply. "But first, let me revel in what my eyes are beholding -- a young woman who works with apparent joy and a continual smile and whose enjoyment of work is written all over her countenance. My wife praises you to the sky, as the saying goes, and now I have discovered the reason of her praise and the validity of her words. I have been observing you for quite some time, and I am truly convinced that you are the girl for whom I have been looking to fill a vacancy in my business -- a receptionist in my office. When will you be able to come to my home for an interview, Oh, pardon me, please, I'm Drew Weatherall of Weatherall Estates. Here's my calling card. My wife shops here all the time -- buys everything she can from you. She declares you're the nicest and most courteous salesperson she's ever dealt with. 'Always helpful and kind and willing to go out of her way to please,' my wife has told me."

"Thank you, Mr. Weatherall. It's a pleasure to wait on your wife. She's a very lovely and pleasant woman and we always have a wonderful time going over the selections together."

"Eileen said you would be an asset to our rapidly-expanding business, and I'm convinced she's right. She's a shrewd judge of human character, my wife is. You will come for an interview?" the middle-aged man asked, searching Kristin's face for an answer.

Looking her questioner in his face, Kristin replied softly, "I can't promise that I will, Mr. Weatherall, not until I have prayed about the matter. You see, I try never to do anything without first consulting my wonderful Lord and Saviour about it. In Proverbs 3:6, God admonished His children, 'In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.' So I cannot promise until I have prayed about it and sought God's will in the matter. I am very happy and completely satisfied working here in the store. I feel you should know this. However, if God has other plans for me, then I will follow His leading. But I must be sure that it is of God. Thank you most kindly for asking me. I promise that I'll be fair with you and really pray over your offer."

Tears stood in the man's eyes. For a moment he was speechless. He had encountered all kinds of people in his business and always he had known what to say.., what answers to give them.., and here was a young woman, fresh out of high school, whose reply had left him speechless, baffled and confused -- a strangely-new kind of feeling tugged in his heart, a feeling that her kind of life was far superior and better than his and his wife's way of living.

"You will call me then," he said in a strange sounding hoarse voice, "after you have . . . uh . . . made contact with the Higher Power."

"The Lord willing, yes, Mr. Weatherall. Give me a few days to pray about it."

Perspiring profusely and visibly shaken by something so altogether new and different to him, the man said, "Fair enough. Fair enough. I'll be waiting for your call..."

"Drew Weatherall!" a voice exclaimed pleasantly as the man turned to leave. "What are you doing here? Not trying to take my number one salesperson away from me, are you?"

Kristin's cheeks flushed pink. Mr. Weatherall smiled. "How did you know?" the latter asked, shaking Mr. Kelly's hand vigorously. "To be truthful," Drew added, "I am. Eileen's been telling me for some time that your star saleslady is the very person I need to grace that Office of mine via receptionist. And I'm fully convinced, after observing and watching her for three full hours, that my wife is so very right. This girl charms her customers. Didn't I see how she calmed that crotchety Mrs. Noggen, whose venom and distaste over this unbearable heat was registered plainly upon every feature of her face? And didn't I behold a modern day miracle when I saw that same afore-mentioned woman leave this young woman's department with a fan in her hand and a smile on her face to shop in the various departments of your store . . . all because of courtesy and kindness?"

Slapping Mr. Weatherall on his shoulders and saying kindly, "No go, Drew! Kristin's God's special gift to the store and to me."

"You never used to be religious," the business man said to the store manager in surprise and disbelief.

"Right," Mr. Kelly admitted, starting down the aisle with his friend. "But that girl has something Helen and I've needed for a long time. She doesn't know it yet, but we've begun reading the Bible, and we plan to start going to church, too."

"Where?"

"To Kristin's church. Helen says it must be wonderful, judging from Kristin's life. She's like no one we've ever met or seen before. Her life exudes something of another world, and she is a constant and continual example and testimony of true Christian courtesy. In many respects, she reminds me of my grand' mother..."

"See what I mean!" Aletha exclaimed to Jane when both men were out of hearing. "She is a pet of the Kellys. Why else do you suppose Mr. Kelly would have called her his number one salesperson?"

Jane was thoughtful for a moment; then she said, "You know Aletha, Kristin is different. She's always super and kind and courteous to all her customers. I believe I'm beginning to see just why people love her and want her to wait on them. Yes, I'm finally beginning to see and to understand, and I'm going to do something about my careless, indifferent and unconcerned attitude.

"Are you going to become a Christian, too?" Aletha asked in shocked surprise, mocking.

"Don't be too surprised if I do," Jane replied. "There's something inexplicably beautiful about Kristin -- something that comes from within her being. It would help both yours and my disposition, Aletha. And, too, like Kristin has often said, 'Christian courtesy never goes out of style or becomes out-dated. It's always proper and beautiful for all peoples and all ages.' " With that Jane set to work with a will, deciding that she would talk to Kristin about that something she called the new birth, or being born again.

* * * * *

THE END