

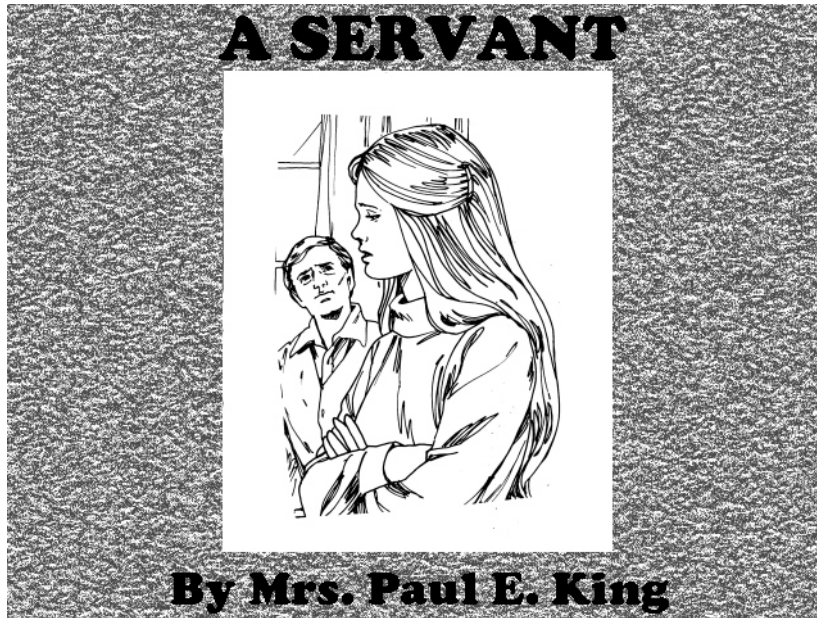
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A SERVANT
By Mrs. Paul E. King

"So that's what I want you to do," Allan Redford told his niece as she sat looking out into the magnificent sunset.

Candace Drake sat staring, like she hadn't heard.

Allan, watching her face carefully, finally asked, "Did you hear me, Candace?"

Not saying anything, Candace got up from the white wicker settee and, with arms folded, walked over to the verandah rafting and leaned her slender, petite form against the clean, white pillar and gazed across the sprawling lawn to the lake beyond.

The sun dazzled the clear blue-green shining water extravagantly with a shimmering rose-gold-peach shimmer.

Allan Redford, not one to be denied, especially not where his sophisticated, very-spoiled niece was concerned, got to his feet and walked across the verandah to where she stood. "You heard me, Candace," he said softly, placing a gentle but firm hand on her shoulder.

Straightening her diminutive, very-petite shoulders and bringing her tiny frame up to its full four-feet-eleven inch height, Candace jutted her dainty chin out defiantly, "I heard you, Uncle" she replied.

"Well. . . ." He tilted her chin, forcing her eyes to look up into his.

"If you mean that you expect me to . . . to . . . stoop to something so . . . so menial and so very humbling, I won't do it!" The open defiance that was in her voice showed visibly on her face and in her eyes, as well.

Gently but firmly Allan spun his niece around and, grasping her by the shoulders, he said with authority, "You will do as you are told, Candace. You chose to come here to live with Norma and me while your parents are abroad on a sabbatical, and one of the rules for our family is that everyone obeys the rules set down by the head of the household. God put me at the head as husband and father and, in your case, as uncle. I will expect you to carry out my orders, my dear. We are happy to have you. But you must obey your aunt and me while you are here."

"But . . . but Uncle Allan, that . . . that's expecting me to . . . to become, well, just plain old domestic help; in other words, a servant! You . . . you're a doctor; you can surely afford to hire somebody to . . . to clean this enormous house at least once a week!"

"Candace, you will do as I have told you. Yes, I could afford to hire a cleaning woman if Norma and I wanted one. But our children -- and now that you are here you are one of our family -- must not, dare not, grow up not knowing how to work nor how to earn a living of their own. The Bible says if a man will not work neither shall he eat. It states also that the sleep of a laboring man is sweet. Working is an honorable thing; it's a privilege, really."

Tears were shimmering in the defiant blue-green eyes. "That's so utterly humiliating!" she cried. "Mother doesn't make. . . ."

"No more words, dear," Allan ordered kindly. "Your mother and father both told me to make you work. In fact, my sister -- your mother -- told me that when she returns she is going to see to it that you carry your share of the work around the house. Since her very recent conversion, and in reading the Bible, she sees her mistake in allowing you to pretty much have your own way and to do as you wish to do. God has set down rules governing the family, Candace, and how a home is to be run; proper rearing and training of children is clearly defined in the Bible. You are told to obey."

"Why can't you just use me as a receptionist in your office?" she asked, baring her heart and exposing the hope she had secretly lodged away inside her being. After all, being a receptionist for Doctor Allan Redford was quite a prestigious position. This was her long dreamed about wish and desire.

Allan Redford stared in stunned silence at his demanding "unbroken" niece. She reminded him of the first horse his father had ever told him to "break" and tame for riding the range in rounding up cattle and for checking fences. She was a beautiful chestnut-brown mare, full of spirit but also full of self-determination. He never did break her; it took one of his father's ranch hands, a pro at breaking horses, to get the job done. But when the mare was broken she became one of the best horses on the ranch. How he had loved Brown Eyes, as he had called her. Once broken, he could manipulate her at will. She loved her young master.

Looking down into the determined face and the demanding eyes, Allan replied simply, "I have an exceptionally competent receptionist, Candace. She's worked in the office for years. I don't have need of a new one." "Bu . . . but I'm your niece!"

The implication was plain as daylight. The message came through loud and clear. Doctor Redford felt sick in the pit of his stomach. Here was a young woman, his niece, whose demanding determination, stubborn "unbrokenness" and carnal pride made her outward physical attractiveness dissolve completely and totally into disgusting ugliness and total undesirability. This unbroken nature of having her own way would have to be broken by One who knew the business of "breaking" expertly; Allan would call upon Him. He was the Specialist of all specialists in breaking carnal wills and eradicating the same and filling the victim's heart with the gentle Dove-Spirit nature and Being. Meanwhile, he, Allan, would do his part.

"Candace" he said, "Jesus said 'he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.' You want so badly to be in the limelight -- out where people will see Candace. But until you are willing and ready to work behind the scenes, as it were, and to do what is asked of you, there will be no 'out front' work of any kind for you. In other words, what I am trying to tell you is simply this; you must humble yourself. Yes, you heard me correctly; I said, you must humble yourself! The scriptures teach us that 'Pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall' (Proverbs 16:18). A little farther along in that wonderful Book of Proverbs, which, incidentally, is a marvelous Book of instruction on how the family is to do, and what; at any rate, in the 29th chapter and the 23rd verse, it states, '. . . a man's pride shall bring him low.' I must be honest and fair with you and truthful to you; unless you change and humble yourself willingly and obediently, God may have to use drastic measures on you to bring you down."

"I've never been so humiliated in all of my life. Never!" she cried, turning and running from the wide, cheerful verandah.

Allan Redford stood gazing out across the expanse of shimmering, shining water, wondering, for a moment, if Norma and he had been wise in allowing this niece to come and share their home for a year. Then he recalled how he and his wife had prayed about it when Candace had asked them if she could stay, and how certain-sure they felt that God had a hand in it all. Instantly, his fears were allayed and removed and he felt the warm reassurance of God's green light in what they had done, and he began humming an old hymn of the church.

He leaned his tall, broad frame against a pillar on the wide verandah and smiled. True, their house was large. It was also old, having been built

when Norma was a tiny infant by her contractor-father who had purchased the land for a small sum of money. He had had to clear the brush away and drag out the many dead, decayed, fallen-down trees. It had been a jungle looking piece of land, his father-in-law had often told him, Allan. With tender, loving hands, and care, the six-bedroom house was built to accommodate the large family.

After Norma's parents had raised their nine children they felt the house was too large and big for them. They settled down in a small two-bedroom Cape Cod nearby and he and Norma bought and took possession of the old home place. In spite of the years of hard usage, the house required only a minimum of remodeling. They were happy to be raising their own family in the dear old memory-laden place.

Allan's thoughts wandered idly back to his niece again. It was only right and fair that she be made to assume her share of the household duties, and every other week of cleaning the house wasn't asking too much of her. Especially not since Cynthia, their daughter, two years younger than Candace, had been assuming the responsibility each week for well over a year now.

He smiled, recalling the girl's words about being just "plain old domestic help," and "a servant." That she considered and felt herself to be above such "menial" work was all too obvious. Again he felt sick in the pit of his stomach. Little wonder that houses looked so untidy and cluttered and uninviting, he mused silently, when daughters were unlearned and not taught to be "keepers at home," and how to "guide the house." Well, he had an obligation to this little niece of his and with God's help he meant to carry out and fulfill that very important obligation. He would be loving and kind but firm with her and, with earnest praying and waiting upon God, he knew there would be a marked change.

Norma met him just as he passed through the French doors into the living room. "Whatever is wrong with that girl?" she asked. "She's positively furious, Allan. Heidi just came down from upstairs to tell me that Candace is lying across the bed in her room punching her fist into the pillow and declaring angrily, 'I won't do it! I won't! I won't!'"

"We have a very proud and extremely determined and stubborn niece on our hands, honey. She thinks she's made for bigger things than to be a

common 'domestic helper,' or a 'servant.' Her words, my dear. She would like to be my receptionist. But she positively abhors helping to do the house work."

"How ridiculous and absurd, Allan! Why, housework hasn't hurt anyone. And this is God's plan for us. Personally, I love my God-given role. Especially since I feel I have the very dearest and best husband and children in the world. Is she goading and brooding over the fact that she must clean the house every other week and that this is her week to get the job done?"

"Exactly. In fact, during one 'juncture' of our conversation she declared with vehemence that she wouldn't do it. I insisted otherwise, however."

"Doesn't she realize that we'll give her something for working? Cynthia and Heidi and Robb and Ty have all told me how thankful they are that they have been taught to work, and how to wisely spend the money we give them and to save some each week."

"Yes I told her, Norma. But Miss Candace feels it's beneath her dignity to be a 'domestic help.' We'll let her alone for the time being. Tomorrow morning, God willing, before I leave for the hospital, I'll see that she does what she is told to do. Has she given you any problem with our morning schedule of eating breakfast together as a family? She's at the table on time. I noticed; but, I mean, is it difficult to get her up in time for her to make her bed and tidy the room up, like our children were taught to do?"

"Nothing serious, dear; an occasional grumble, that's all."

Taking his wife's hands in his, he said, "Oh Norma, please join me in earnest prayer for Candace. Pray that God will change her. She could be such a blessing. She'll ruin and wreck her life unless she allows God to save and cleanse her heart. She's such a proud-hearted little thing."

"I'll join you, dear Allan. She's worth every investment we make in her."

"You're a wonderful wife, my dear. Thank you; I knew I could count on you." The following morning, before leaving to make the hospital calls on his patients, Allan Redford placed his hand lightly upon his niece's shoulder. "Today is your big day, Candace" he said. "Today you will begin your lesson in house-cleaning. If you are unsure about anything, call Cynthia; she'll teach

you, dear, and show you what to do. If you will begin immediately after we have our family devotions this morning you will be finished before we have our evening meal, God willing."

"Bu . . . but . . . Uncle, I . . . I'm . . . not . . ." "I'm expecting a beautifully cleaned house by the time I get home this evening, Candace. I know you can do it, and I'm depending on you. You will obey, my dear"

She opened her mouth to object but closed it as quickly again. Her uncle's order bespoke of authority; his tone of voice made it plain who was the head of the family.

It was the most awkward and most humiliating day of her entire life; but Candace, under Cynthia's kind "tutelage" actually learned how to clean and dust. The dust cloth, however, received the moisture of tears shed over the utter humiliation of having to stoop to the lowly position of a servant -- a lowly cleaning maid!

The day wore on. When she paused at noon to eat with the family, she felt exhausted. Never in all her life had she realized all the work that went into keeping a house clean. And pushing a vacuum cleaner was hard work!

She finished shortly before her uncle got home from the office, feeling too tired and weary to care about supper. She knew, however, that she would be expected to be in her place around the table when the meal was served. Dragging her tired feet and weary body up the stairs, she started for the bathroom to get a shower before changing into clean clothes.

Her cousins nearly knocked her over as they rushed up the steps and encircled her.

"You did a fantastic job!" Ty exclaimed in his usual animated fashion.

"Candace, you're great!" Heidi cried joyfully, clapping her hands together happily.

"A truly great job from a super cousin!" Cynthia remarked, hugging Candace soundly.

"And she put all my models back in place!" Robb declared jubilantly. "You're a great cleaning woman!" he added, smiling down proudly into her enormous eyes.

"Th . . . thank you" she answered, on the verge of tears. "I'd never have made it without your help, Cynthia."

Never had a bed felt so good before and, in spite of her extremely aching muscles, Candace slept the sweet, good, sleep of a working woman.

She awoke the following morning with the exhilarating feeling of accomplishment. She, of all people, had done the work of a maid or a servant and she was actually feeling good about it! She could scarcely believe that she was herself!

Her thoughts wandered to Cynthia then and she suddenly felt ashamed of her unwillingness to work and to carry her end of the work load, when none of her cousins seemed to mind one bit that each had to assume an equal share of household, lawn, and garden responsibility. Truth of the matter was, they did their work with apparent delight and happiness.

She pondered this for a long time. Then Cynthia and Heidi popped their smiling faces around the door with a cheerful "Hi, Candy dear."

"Come in," she cried quickly. And before she realized what she was doing, she said, "What makes you all so happy and sweet all the time?"

"Jesus" the sisters chorused simultaneously. "You'd be just as happy as we are," Heidi added, running to Candace and wrapping her arms around her neck, "if you'd ask Jesus to come into your heart"

Candace felt a lump come up in her throat. She remembered how hateful and nasty and stubborn she was to her uncle. "But I've not been good and nice, like you both are."

"We weren't always good either, Candace, before Jesus saved us and came into our hearts" Cynthia declared, twining her fingers around her cousin's.

"I'm so ashamed of myself, and of how I behaved and acted toward Uncle Allan:' Suddenly Candace burst out sobbing and saying, "I want to be good and . . . and different; like you all are. Can Jesus help me, do you suppose? Or . . . or am I too wicked and bad and sinful?" "Oh no, Candace!" the cousins exclaimed, weeping. "Jesus is wanting to save you" Cynthia said with such a positive note of knowing in her voice that Candace pulled her down on her knees with her, crying, "Pray for me, Cynthia and Heidi, please. I want to change. Oh, I do. I do!"

They were a bit late for breakfast that morning, those three girl cousins, But it didn't matter; Candace was born again, of God.

She approached her uncle with a radiant and shining face before she sat down for breakfast that morning. "I want to ask your forgiveness," she said softly, "for my actions, my attitude, my words, and my rebellious spirit out on the verandah. I'm sorry. I'm so ashamed of myself. Please forgive me. With a joy-filled and forgiven heart, I'll gladly and willingly be a servant. I'll scrub floors or do anything. Thank you," she said, weeping, "for making me obey you. I needed this."

Uncle Allan got to his feet and gathered his niece in his arms, saying brokenly, "Oh, Candace, you have made your uncle and aunt and cousins all so very happy today. Now, my dear, yes, now, God will be able to use you. And after you are filled with God's Holy Spirit and the carnal nature is gone -- root and all -- you will, indeed, be a great witness for Jesus. Sit down now, my dear, and eat your breakfast."

"Thank you, dear Uncle. This is the beginning of great things for me. I have ever so many things to explore in the Bible. Cynthia" she said, looking into the face of her dear cousin, "maybe you can help me to understand what I may not understand. Will you be my teacher when I need you? I want to learn. . . ."

"Oh, Candace, we'll study God's Word together, the Lord willing," she replied joyously, giving her cousin's hand an affectionate squeeze.