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BE YE COURTEOUS
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Kay finished straightening the things on the counter for the umpteenth time, it seemed, just as Glenna breezed past her in the outside aisle and in an angry undertone exclaimed tartly, "Trying to show us up, huh?" -- the "us" being Helen and Glenna herself.

Kay smiled. "Oh no, Glenna. I'm only doing what Mr. Hornberger told us to do. Also, I can't stand clutter."

Glenna whirled around and stood quickly in front of Kay. "You're only doing this to get on the good side of Mr. Hornberger. Helen and I know your kind; we've worked here long enough to know the 'rope pullers.' Or, I should say, those who try to pull ropes."

Kay gasped. Nothing could be farther from the truth, she thought. Not once not even one time -- did she think of such a thing. She was only doing what she was accustomed to doing at home giving her best and performing skillfully at what she was told to do. She had been taught this way from childhood.

Glenna turned in time to see a fashionably dressed woman walking quickly to her counter. "Not again!" Kay heard her exclaim before she took her place behind the counter.

Kay felt hot with embarrassment. She was sure the woman heard Glenna's exclamation of disgust.

"Where are the cards and the stationery located?" the woman asked Glenna in a softly-sweet voice.

"On the opposite side of this store at the far end," Glenna replied with a hint of sarcasm, before turning and pretending to busy herself with something beneath the counter.

The woman stared at the bent-over figure of the girl then turned slowly and walked over to where Kay had just finished folding the last sweater and placed it neatly in order on the counter top with those already done.

"Good morning," Kay said brightly. "May I help you, please?" She smiled at the dainty looking, well-dressed woman.

"Thank you. As a matter of fact, yes. Where are the greeting cards? And where is the stationery?"

"Follow this aisle around here to your right," Kay said sweetly, as she pointed with her index finger.

The woman followed Kay's gaze with her own blue eyes.

"Do you see the sign saying Children's Clothing?" she asked, still pointing. "Yes. Yes, I do. . . ."

"Turn left, after you are past that sign. Follow that aisle until you come to the Candy Department. The greeting cards, stationery, envelopes and little boxed notes are across the aisle from the candy department. If you have any more trouble, come back here and I'll see what else I can do to help you." Again Kay smiled sweetly.

"Oh, thank you, my dear. Thank you most kindly. I'm sure I'll be able to find it."

"You are welcome. Have a good day," Kay answered. The woman turned and smiled at Kay. "Thank you, I'm sure I will," she replied, adding, "you are most helpful."

The woman walked away smiling. Kay took the Windex bottle from its hiding place beneath the counter and began cleaning and shining the glass counter tops and fronts in her department.

"People like you make me sick!" Glenna exclaimed as soon as the woman was out of hearing. "First it's the syrupy-sweet reply, then it's the mirror-bright counter tops and fronts. Don't tell me you're not trying to make an impression on Mr. Hornberger; I know differently. And if you think you'll get me to change, well, you're in for a big surprise: I'm not about to kill myself slaving away in any store. Especially when I make only the minimum wage. No way."

Kay made no reply but kept busy shining and cleaning the glass cases and counter tops. She liked cleanliness and order and neatness; it seemed to make her work go easier and better when she had everything in order. "Good morning, girls," a voice said brightly.

Kay turned to see Mr. Hornberger hurrying down the aisle toward Glenna's and her counters. "Good morning," she replied pleasantly.

Glenna gave a muffled sort of greeting and tried to look busy behind her counter.

Mr. Hornberger paused in front of Kay's showcases remarking with a pleased note in his voice, "You have your department looking beautiful, Kay. I like the way you have arranged those sweaters which, I have noticed, you always manage to keep folded nearly in spite of the many shoppers who handle them and look them over then leave them lying in a heap on the counter top. And say, it's been months since this glass has sparkled and shone with cleanliness like it's doing this morning. I like it. It's plain to see that you've been reared and brought up the way I was "

"Oh. . . ?" Kay questioned softly.

"Yes, our parents must have had pretty much the same kind of values-- I was taught to always give my very best to whatever job I was ordered or told to do, no matter how menial or small. I grew up applying the principle and obeying the instructions and I am the happier for having done so. I would not be over this store if I had been lackadaisical and lazy and careless with my work. I appreciate your excellent work, Kay."

"Thank you, Mr. Hornberger. My parents deserve your compliments, since it is they who have taught me."

Mr. Hornberger smiled then hurried away as a group of women walked over to the beautiful sweaters on the counter top.

Kay was pleasant and courteous, smiling and staying busy with minor tasks while the women looked and talked and laughed before buying two sweaters, then leaving.

Kay loved her work; she felt it was one of God's gifts to her. She knew it was. Her mother and she had prayed earnestly about a job for her and this had opened. Oh, the Lord was good to her! And most kind too. He saw the need and He supplied.

She had forgotten all about the well-dressed lady who made inquiry as to how to find the greeting cards and the stationery until a week later when Mr. Hornberger called her to come into his office. Trembling, and wondering what she could have done wrong, she walked to the far end of the store

where the office was located. Taking a deep breath, she turned the knob and opened the door ever so slightly.

"Come right in, Kay," Mrs. Saunders said with a smile on her face. "Mr. Hornberger will see you immediately."

"I . . . I . . . thank you, Mrs. Saunders," Kay stammered to the receptionist/secretary.

"Relax, my dear," Mrs. Saunders remarked in motherly fashion. "you have nothing to worry about. Our boss is highly pleased with you . . ." and with those words, she ushered Kay into an inner office where Mr. Hornberger welcomed her with a smile and a warm handshake.

"I suppose you are wondering why I have wanted to see you," he stated casually and matter-of-factly. "So I shall get right to the point. It gives me great pride, and I feel highly honored, to know that one of my employees has been chosen as the most courteous sales person in our town."

Kay gasped. Then quickly she said, "I . . . I guess I don't understand."

Mr. Hornberger smiled broadly. "Out of all the salespersons in this town, you have been named the most courteous. Do you recall a lady needing directions to the greeting cards?"

Kay smiled. "Yes, I do. She was such a sweet looking lady."

"She works for a big company which, among other things, takes surveys. As a token of appreciation for being 'naturally courteous and helpful and sweet and pleasant,' the letter to me states, they have issued a check to you in the amount of one hundred fifty dollars," and Mr. Hornberger placed the check and the letter in her hands.

Again, Kay gasped. Then tears filled her eyes. "Th . . . thank you," she said. "And, of course, I will write them a letter of thanks also."

"Now, I have something else to mention to you: I am in need of someone like you in the Lay-Away Department. You will make more money, for you will be over that department. Will you please accept the position?"

"Oh, Mr. Hornberger," Kay said quickly, "if you need me there, of course I will accept it. And with God's help, I will do my very best in that department."

"I know you will. Yes, I know you will. Thank you, Kay. I will have someone show you what needs done there. You will begin full time in that department on Monday."

Kay felt like she was on a cloud as she left the office and hurried out to where she was working. The Lord had been good to her. So very good. And all because of showing and displaying a common courtesy.

As she walked behind her counter, 1 Peter 3:8-9 came quickly to mind: "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

"Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing."

Inherit a blessing! Why, she had inherited two material blessings. Yes, she had. Tears swam in her eyes -- tears of joy and gratitude.