

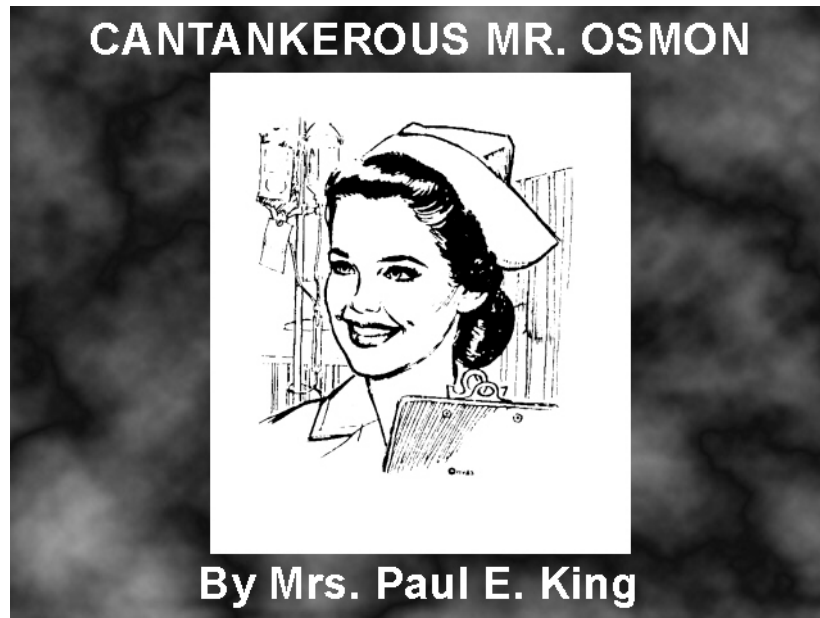
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CANTANKEROUS MR. OSMON
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Kaleta Donnell heard her superior's soft voice break into the early morning's busy routine and call her name. Turning, she hurried back to the nurses' station. 'You called me, Mrs. Hudson,' she said. "What do you need?"

"Oh Kaleta," the middle-aged woman replied, "I hate to do this to you again. But you're the only one who can. . . ."

"It's Mr. Osmon again," Kaleta said with a smile as Mrs. Hudson's sentence trailed somewhere above her gray head. "Right?"

"I'm sorry, Kaleta. But yes, you're right; it's Norman Osmon. Again! And he's more contemptible and mean and ornery than ever this morning, it seems. Becky went to adjust his bed and prepare him for his bath and he slapped her. So hard, in fact, that he nearly knocked her to the floor. She came out of the room in tears, with a bright red welt across her face. I'm sorry, Kaleta, but you're the only one who seems to know how to handle him."

Picking up the chart where Becky had laid it down, Kaleta said, "I'll take care of him. Tell Becky not to worry."

"Thanks, Kaleta. It's too bad we have to get cases in like this. But we do. And since he needs help, we're obligated to give it."

"He does need our care, Mrs. Hudson, and I'm happy to be able to do what little I can to help alleviate his pain. I'm afraid Mr. Osmon is galling under the diagnosis of his disease."

"But the prognosis is good, Kaleta. This frustrates me no end. I could understand it if the report of the prognosis was bad or long term; but it isn't. And Mr. Osmon's doctor explained everything to him; told him what to expect, how the disease would progress unless treated, et cetera. He consented to the treatment, thankfully, as you know. So why the ill treatment to our nurses? Why the foul, dark mood? He's an intelligent man and he has a brilliant mind. It's not like he's too stupid or 'dense' to comprehend and understand."

"That may be part of his problem, Mrs. Hudson. Many times those with less knowledge have more wisdom and take things in stride, accepting and obeying what is best for them. In some cases, knowledge puffs individuals up with pride and fills them with a false assumption that they have everything under control, even their lives. Well, I'll see you. I'm glad I had a refreshing and blessed time with the Lord before leaving home this morning."

"You'll need it!" Mrs. Hudson exclaimed emphatically, adding, "Do you really believe in prayer and that kind of thing, Kaleta? It's almost become obsolete."

"No, it hasn't, my dear friend. Oh no, it hasn't. Maybe the media would like for you to believe it has; but such is not the case. There are literally thousands and thousands of people who still pray and believe in the power of prayer. I am one of them. I have seen the miracles that are wrought by prayer, not just once, but time and time again."

"Well, you'll need a miracle today, if Becky's few minutes in Mr. Osmon's room were any foreboding of what's ahead for the rest of the day. He is one cantankerous man!"

Kaleta smiled as she hurried away to room 274B, knowing that the One who spoke tempestuous waves to quietness and calmness could well manage an outspoken, tyrannical seeming but very frightened man and bring him under subjection and submission to doctor's orders.

She paused outside the door and prayed a brief but earnest prayer before pushing the door open wide and entering, calling out brightly, "Good morning, good morning, Mr. Osmon. What a beautiful day this is. But say, you can't see how glorious and golden it is outside with the draperies pulled shut. There!" she exclaimed, as she pulled the heavy draperies open wide and the golden sunlight shimmered in through trembling leaves.

"Shut those curtains! Shut them! I command you to close them. This is my room. I'll be paying the bill and I demand that you pull those curtains back the way they were."

"Not now, Mr. Osmon. I want you to see what a great big beautiful world the Lord has created for you beyond your windows. When it's time for a nap I'll pull them partway shut, but not now. Right now, you must get your bath and then you'll have your breakfast. This morning it's to be a full and complete breakfast, I notice from your chart. Now isn't that nice? A real man's breakfast."

Pulling himself up to a sitting position, he glared at Kaleta. Making a fist, he shouted, "Pull those curtains. Now! And I won't be taking a bath. Do

you hear me? Don't come near me. I'll knock you down if you get any closer to this bed. Do you hear me? I mean it!"

Stepping over beside the man's bed, Kaleta grabbed the fist that shot out toward her. She held tightly to the clenched hand and, while tears ran from her eyes, she prayed for Norm Osmon, asking the Lord to calm his fears and frustrations and to subdue his awful anger. Then she released his hand and, very gently she said, "Now I'm going to help you out of bed and into the shower. While I put clean linens on the bed you get your shower. Call me if you need help." With that, she supported him until he was inside the bathroom, then she closed the door and hurriedly stripped the bed and dressed it neatly in fresh, clean linens, rejoicing greatly in her heart when she heard the water running inside the shower.

She heard him turn the water off and, in a little while, she heard the motor of his electric shaver humming. Mr. Osmon was shaving! It was a miracle. A real miracle. He forbade anybody to so much as mention, even, that a nice, clean shave would be ever so good for him. And now he was shaving. Actually shaving himself!

Kaleta felt tears roll down her cheeks. She lifted her eyes to the sun-drenched windows and the beauties beyond before she raised them heavenward and whispered softly, "Thank You, kind Father. Oh, thank You. Not only is the world You made beautiful but You are working a miracle in a hard heart. Make it a place where You can dwell and live and rule. Give Mr. Osmon a miracle; a miracle of conversion. In Jesus' name, I ask this. . . ."

"You were talking to someone?"

Kaleta hadn't heard the bathroom door open nor had she heard the man come out into the room.

"I was," she admitted as she brushed the tears from her cheeks. "I was talking to my best and dearest Friend, Mr. Osmon -- the Lord Jesus Christ. I was talking to Him about you."

The man was speechless. He cleared his throat several times, then, in a softly-subdued voice, he said, "Please help me up onto the bed, Miss Miller. Showering and shaving tired me pretty well out."

"I'm sure it did, Mr. Osmon. But you look wonderful. And I'm sure you feel wonderful too. There's something about a shower that seems to relax every muscle in the body."

The man smiled faintly. "It does that," he agreed, as Kaleta pulled the sheet up and covered him, adding a lightweight blanket to his feet.

"The report on you is good, Mr. Osmon," Kaleta said, as she read the chart. "You are making wonderful progress."

Mr. Osmon looked at her for a long time. Then he said softly, "Sit down, please, Miss Miller. You wouldn't lie to me; I know you wouldn't. I trust you" Tears filled his eyes.

"Thank you, Mr. Osmon. No, I wouldn't lie to you. I am a Christian; what I tell you is the truth.

"I know. I know." He closed his eyes. Tears trickled out from beneath the now-graying lashes.

Kaleta prayed silently, sensing that the moment for which she had been praying was coming.

Mr. Osmon opened his eyes and looked at her for a long, long while. "I'm afraid, Miss Miller. So afraid!" he exclaimed in little more than a whispered confession.

Kaleta put the chart on the stand beside the bed and patted the man's shoulder, saying, "Would you care to tell me about it, Mr. Osmon? Even strong men, and great men, sometimes are fearful and afraid."

Norman Osmon's lips trembled and quivered. "We're not supposed to be, you know," he said rather dryly. "Afraid, I mean."

"Oh, aren't you? Who said you can't, or you must not?"

"Oh, Miss Miller, surely you are aware of the fact that men are expected to be brave and fearless. And I was. All my life I have feared nothing, it seems. I was able to do whatever I desired to do. I was in control of my life. And now, well . . . look at me. I am helpless, to a degree. I must depend upon

you to help me out of the bed and back into the bed. I must be helped down to therapy, helped in therapy and helped back to my room again. And the sad thing is that I will never be able to work again at my life-long job for the company. I've lost control over my life and, frankly, I'm scared. I'm so afraid, Miss Miller. So very afraid. I feel as helpless as a little child."

"Mr. Osmon," Kaleta said, "I've been praying for you. From the day you entered Brookside Hospital I have prayed for you; prayed for your salvation. I've sensed your fear and your apprehension and I have wept over it. You say you feel as helpless as a child; this is good."

"Good? How can it be good? When one has pretty much controlled his own life and been in command of what he wanted to do and where he wanted to go, how can you say it is good when he is thrust into the role of a child and is rendered helpless?"

"Jesus said unless we became as little children and were converted we could never enter into Heaven. So you see, Mr. Osmon, it is good. And truthfully, it was not you who controlled your life; it was God and His goodness to you all along. Our life is like a vapor, the Bible tells us. And it's like a weaver's shuttle. Think of it, Mr. Osmon; a vapor is here, then it is gone. Psalms tells us our times are in God's hands. He gives life and health and strength and breath. It was He who made it possible for you to go and do and be. Don't you see? Without God giving you breath and strength you would long ago have ceased to be. You wouldn't be here. We are such dependent creatures, Mr. Osmon -- upon God. The very air we breathe comes from Him. Our every breath, too."

"I . . . I see, Miss Miller. I . . . well . . . I never stopped to think about this. But you are right." Sudden tears filled the man's eyes.

"The Bible tells us that in Him we live, and move, and have our being," Kaleta added softly, quoting from Acts 17:28.

Mr. Osmon closed his eyes and was silent for a long time. Then he said soberly, "And all the time I thought it was I who was the master of my life! How wrong I've been! How deceived! You are right, Miss Miller; God alone can give breath and life. And strength and health, too. How acutely aware I am of this now, lying here, smitten down with a disease I didn't know I had."

He groaned and turned his head to the side. Then he broke out in great, long sobs, saying, "I forgot Him but He didn't forget me. Oh, how could I have treated Him so!"

Kaleta listened patiently, wondering about whom he was talking; whom he had forgotten.

Turning toward her, Mr. Osmon said suddenly, humbly, "Miss Miller, my grandmother told me years ago, when I had graduated from college and pushed God out of my thoughts after closing my heart to Him, that she wouldn't give God any rest until I had come to know Him as my Lord and my Savior. She vowed that she would pray for me so long as breath remained in her body. And she was true to her vow: to her dying day, she prayed for me. This is the answer to her many prayers: God didn't forget me even though I forgot Him. In answer to my grandmother's prayers, He placed me in the care of a nurse who knows the same God she knew and loved and served. I think it's time I prayed. Please, Miss Miller, will you pray for me? I need God. . . ."

Again he broke out in great sobs.

Bending over his shaking form and listening only briefly to the man's muffled cries to God for help and mercy on his soul, Kaleta led out in prayer, knowing that, soon, Mr. Osmon would find his rest and peace in God.