

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

* * * * *

Digital Edition 10/22/2001
By Holiness Data Ministry

* * * * *

The Sunday School Beacon
May 25, 1997



IN ALL THINGS, GOD'S FAVOR
By Mrs. Paul E. King

Amy left the office of her supervisor, feeling dazed and shocked. She had just received a reprimand; her first ever. But things were not the way Mrs. Ketterman had purported them to be. Not at all. She, Amy, had not left her department in the big store in a mess when the store had closed the preceding night. Like always, she had checked the entire department and straightened out whatever needed straightening out or put in order. Every

shelf in the department had been neat and beautiful by the time she was finished with her checking: it was ready and in order for the morning business.

Her mind was in a whirl as she walked away from Mrs. Ketterman's office. What had happened to her department after she left the store? she wondered. Who had done the deed? And why?

She hurried to her department, knowing full well that every minute counted if she was to get things in order before the store opened. She had seen Mardel Liken still in the store as she got her few belongings out of the locker before leaving, she remembered. But she didn't want to think that Mardel would do anything so mean and cruel. Mardel was a loner; sort of an "island" among the many employees in the store. Amy had tried repeatedly but unsuccessfully to get close to the pretty redhead, who gave her the cold shoulder with every attempt she made. Poor Mardel; she seemed to carry the proverbial "chip on her shoulder" at all times, Amy thought, with a feeling of pity and love for her fellow employee.

Working feverishly and furiously, Amy prayed for Mardel, and for whoever it was that had put her department in such order and disarray after her leaving last night. Her mind was full of questions as she worked: Why had the deed been done? Did someone hate her, maybe? Had she done something to have instigated or caused the hatred, if, indeed, there was hatred involved? Or had one of the stores decorating personnel had done it as sort of a joke? Cory Aronson often teased her about being "forever calm and compliant," adding that, "Someday somebody's going to find your vulnerable spot, and then watch out for little Amy."

Amy knew it wasn't Cory. She was sure of it. Cory teased her endlessly, it seemed, but she knew Cory wasn't mean; he wouldn't do what had happened to her department. For all his teasing and jostling, Cory had told her, on a more serious note, that he had been watching her carefully and that he admired her and stood in awe of her. He had even asked her on one occasion what it was that kept her so calm and unruffled and sweet and kind when everything around her seemed to be off kilter and was caving in and going to pieces. She had told him about the Lord and what He had done in her heart; how His saving grace and sanctifying power had transformed and cleansed her soul, and that it was His presence in her heart that was the anchor which kept her calm and steady.

There were tears in Cory's eyes when she had finished. No, it wasn't Cory.

Amy looked up from her work in time to see Mardel go by. "Good morning, Mardel," she called cheerily and pleasantly.

Mardel gave Amy's department a quick glance then hurried on, saying, "What a mess you left last night!"

Amy felt tears form in her eyes. She said nothing, knowing that the Judge of all the earth knew exactly what had happened and who had done the evil deed, and why. Above all things, she wanted to maintain and keep the Lord's smile and His favor. Any reply on her part would have been useless. Mardel would have had some kind of caustic answer and rebuttal.

She had just put the last counter in order when Mrs. Ketterman came by, saying, "See this doesn't happen again, Amy. I'm surprised -- and shocked -- that you left without straightening things up last night, and putting them in order."

"I did, Mrs. Ketterman. I honestly and truly did have the department all neat and in order before I left."

Laughing sardonically, Mrs. Ketterman remarked, "Do you suppose a group of mischievous elves came in and did the deed after the store was closed, Amy? See that it doesn't happen again," she added sternly, before leaving.

Amy felt sick in the pit of her stomach. She had always followed orders; she did what she was told to do. Mrs. Ketterman knew this.

It was a busy day. Amy worked non-stop, waiting on her customers, answering their questions and ringing up sales. She was happy to be working. She loved her department.

"Hi, Amy." A cheerful voice greeted her in a brief lull of busyness. "How about lunch with me?"

Amy looked up and saw Cory grinning impishly at her. "I have only a half hour, Cory. Thanks."

"As if I don't know!" he exclaimed mischievously. "Does anyone here get more time than that? We can order a bagel and a glass of orange juice. At least that's healthy eating." His dark eyes searched her face. "Do I get an OK?"

Smiling, Amy consented. "I'll see you at 12 sharp," he said. "At the entrance to the restaurant on the second floor."

"12 sharp!" Amy parroted, as she waited on a customer who handed her some merchandise for ringing up. Less than an hour later, she met Cory at the cheerful restaurant upstairs.

"It's more than a bagel," he told her when they were seated. "Their reuben sandwiches are something else up here. And we'll have time for that, I'm sure."

"I'll have a salad, Cory. OK? You get your reuben, if that's what you want."

"It is what I want, Miss Amy." Cory's laughter almost made Amy forget there had been a problem earlier that day.

It was after Amy had said grace for her food that Cory spoke up. "I hear Mrs. Ketterman had you up in her office."

Amy's fork poised in mid-air with a dainty bite of salad balanced on its tines. "Ho . . . how'd you know?" she asked in little more than a whisper. "Who told you, Cory?"

"Gaylena heard her. She had gone up to ask Mrs. Ketterman about something before the store opened. She said she couldn't help but hear; that Mrs. Ketterman got pretty loud and nasty with you." Pausing between a bite of his sandwich, Cory said, "Amy, we all know you're innocent of what happened in your department. And if you need a witness, I'm at your service. I saw how you left everything last night."

"Oh, Cory, I'm sorry that this has been spread around."

"I'm glad Gaylena told me. She's upset. So am I.

We're pretty sure we know who did it" Cory's statement trailed.

"Please, Cory, we mustn't accuse anybody. It's so easy to misjudge and to accuse falsely or wrongly. The Lord knows I didn't leave my department in a mess last night and that's all that matters."

Cory looked at Amy for a long while. "It better not happen again," he finally said in a warning tone of voice as he bit into his sandwich.

"Thanks much for my lunch," Amy said, as she broke the silence that ensued after Cory's statement. "It's so cheerful up here; and the view of the park, from all these many windows, is really quite spectacular. I love pretty views and beautiful scenery."

"You are as innocent as a child and as pure as an angel," Cory stated almost reverently. "Little Amy's thoughts are beautiful; so she sees the beauty in everything around her." Deep admiration shone in his dark eyes. Then he said quickly, "The hands on the clock are urging us back to work. I'll pay; you go. I don't want Mrs. Ketterman chewing you out again."

"She was only doing what she felt was her duty, Cory. Thanks for wanting to help me. I'm ever so thankful it wasn't Mr. Darby himself! I'll see you, Lord willing and, again, thanks for my lunch. It was delicious."

A week later, to the day, Amy was met at her department by an angry and extremely upset Mrs. Ketterman. "I told you not to allow this to happen again -- not ever!" the woman exclaimed in anger.

Amy was aghast when she saw her department. "I didn't do it, Mrs. Ketterman. Honestly I didn't. I left everything neat and in order last night."

"You dare to contradict what you are seeing, Amy? What is visible for everybody to see? How dare you to lie to me?"

"Please, Mrs. Ketterman, believe me, I'm not lying." Amy was in tears. "I didn't leave it like this last night. I have no idea who's done this these two times; I only know I didn't leave it this way."

"Lies. Lies. Lies." Mrs. Ketterman was livid with anger.

Burying her face in her hands, Amy wept. Then she said softly, "Please, Mrs. Ketterman, believe me: I didn't lie. I'm a Christian. Jesus is Lord of my life. He said all liars will one day burn forever in the lake of fire. I didn't lie and I don't lie. The Lord Jesus Christ makes those who love and serve Him more than a conqueror."

"I'll let you tell your fables to Mr. Darby, Amy. Now, get busy. Put everything in order, then report up to Mr. Darby's office. I'll let him know you're coming, and why. And please, please spare him the little sermon. He won't be any more impressed than I am. Maybe, even, less!"

"Hold it! Hold it!"

Mr. Darby stopped the hastily disappearing Mrs. Ketterman with his loud command. "You may go to my office," he told her seriously. "I'll be up shortly." Turning, he hurried over to Amy.

"Get the department in order," he said kindly. "Then come up to my office, please, Amy."

"Yes, sir. But please, Mr. Darby, believe me, I didn't leave this in the mess you're seeing it in. In everything I do, I try to keep the smile and the favor of God on my life: this includes my daily work here."

"Have no fear, Amy. Your work here all these months has spoken for itself. Meet me upstairs in the office as soon as you have everything in order again. I'll have one of the other girls fill in for you until we're finished."

"Thanks, Mr. Darby."

Tapping lightly on the office door a while later, Amy was surprised to see Cory seated in one of the chairs.

"We all know the reason for this meeting," Mr. Darby said, after he had seated Amy. "And first of all, I think some apologies are in order," he said, waving a hand toward Mrs. Ketterman.

Hardly daring to look at Amy, the supervisor said, "I... I guess I was wrong about some things. . . ."

Getting to his feet, Mr. Darby said emphatically, "I repeat: Apologies are in order -- in the plural!"

"I ask your forgiveness, Amy, for accusing you falsely and for all but calling you a liar."

"All but?" Mr. Darby repeated sternly. "Apologize rightly, Mrs. Ketterman."

"I ask your forgiveness for calling you a liar, Amy, and for calling the things you said were in the Bible, fables. Also, for falsely accusing you twice with leaving your department in the mess it was in. I was wrong. I'm sorry. I apologize for being so hateful to you, too."

"You are forgiven, Mrs. Ketterman, and your apology is accepted," Amy replied, wondering what was going on.

"Cory, show us what you have," Mr. Darby said soberly.

Getting to his feet and opening a brown manila envelope, Cory passed the pictures around just as the door opened and Mardel was brought in by Gaylena. The evidence was there for all to see. Cory's hidden camera had done a super job.

"What do you have to say of these?" Mr. Darby asked when the pictures were held in front of Mardel.

Mardel was speechless. She looked pale and angry. "I'm quitting," she exclaimed as she started for the door.

"You're not quitting, Mardel; you're fired. But you won't leave until you've apologized to an innocent young woman," Mr. Darby declared.

"I won't do it," she retorted angrily. "Some people get all the breaks." With that, she all but ran out the door.

"Let her go," Mr. Darby ordered when Gaylena turned to follow her and bring her back.

"Please, Mr. Darby," Amy pleaded, "don't . . . fire her because of me. I feel so sorry for her. Maybe she'll let me help her now and be her friend. She's such a loner."

"Some people seem not to want help, Amy. And you heard her say she was quitting," Mr. Darby added. "So I'll not need to repeat what she already knows. She brought it on herself. I'm sorry this has happened to you, Amy. Take my word, it will never happen to you again. Everybody who knows you, knows that you are honest and diligent and upright. Thank you, Cory and Gaylena, for your help. And now you may all get back to work."

"Thank you, Mr. Darby," Amy said, softly and kindly.

"Thank you, Amy, for your excellent work in the store, and for being what you are and who you are. Don't change, please. Stay like you are. And say a prayer for me every now and then. I need it." Mr. Darby was in tears when he finished speaking.

"I will, Mr. Darby," Amy answered. "I'll put you on my prayer list and pray every day for you, God willing. Again, thank you."

She hurried from the office. Cory was waiting for her. "Thanks, Cory, for the pictures," she said. "I feel so sorry for Mardel, though. Why did she do it, I wonder?"

"Because she doesn't have beautiful thoughts, nor see the beauty in people and things like you do," Cory replied. Hoarsely, he said, "I wonder if you'd put me on that prayer list too, Amy? I need it. Prayer, I mean. I don't know of anyone I'd rather have praying for me than you."

"Oh, Cory, thank you. Of course, I'll be praying for you. Your name's been on my list for quite some time now."

"You honor me, Amy. Thanks. Here's where we part," Cory said "You to your department; me to my decorating and eye-catching displays. Have a good day, little Amy."

"I will," Amy promised, "so long as I can keep the Lord's favor." Smiling, she hurried away to her department.