

GETTIN' OLD
AIN'T FOR WIMPS
VOLUME 2

KAREN O'CONNOR



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Names and minor details have been changed in the real-life stories shared in this book to protect the privacy of the individuals mentioned.

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To June

My sister waiting for me on the other side

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A Note from the Author

Oh those golden years! There are times when they glitter and times when they're a bit lackluster. Health problems, financial concerns, and relationship challenges can tarnish an otherwise happy day. On the other hand, we're generally confident in who we are, know how to enjoy life, have children and grandchildren to keep us young, and are wise enough to laugh at our foibles!

I hope you'll enjoy this collection of original, lighthearted stories and inspirations to warm your heart and tickle your funny bone. Included are scriptures and prayers to nurture your spirit and turn your eyes to the One who made us, who numbered our days, and who promises clearly that he will never leave us nor forsake us—right up to our last breath...and beyond.

*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess,
for he who promised is faithful.*

HEBREWS 10:23

—Karen O'Connor

PART 1



WHAT'S IN A WORD?

The Exhausted King



Harvey had gotten hearing aids, but he doubted they were doing their job. His wife tugged on his shirtsleeve and whispered in his ear more often than he wanted to admit. It seemed he was confusing words, mishearing initial sounds, and generally “missing the boat,” especially when there were more than three or four people talking. About the only place he felt confident was in the first row of St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, where he’d been a faithful member for more than 50 years.

But there was another problem—one Harvey was equally bummed about. He had a difficult time staying awake during Pastor Richard’s sermons. He wished he could sit in the back so the minister wouldn’t notice, but if he did he couldn’t hear as well. On the other hand, if he snoozed he’d miss part of the sermon anyway—so what difference did it make where he sat? Harvey had a dilemma. He decided to put off his decision and spend the next few weeks sitting on the side near the worship group.

The following Sunday Harvey and Mabel arrived ten minutes before the service began. They chose two seats on the right side. Leonard Fuchs, the choir director, came into the sanctuary and took his place in front of the singers. Harvey leaned back and allowed the music to waft over him, filling his spirit with peace and joy and the love of the Lord.

He felt so good that he didn't care what happened next. He was already in ecstasy. He felt himself nod off a couple of times, but he pulled himself back to reality when the music swelled.

After the service he and Mabel walked out to the vestibule, greeted their friends, shook hands with Pastor Richard, and strolled out to their car in the corner of the parking lot.

Harvey tucked his hand in Mabel's and gave it a playful squeeze. "I loved the music today, didn't you? I felt as though I were sleeping on a cloud."

"It wasn't a cloud, dear. It was a seat—in church. And you not only snoozed, you snored. So I'm surprised you even heard the music at all."

Harvey dropped his wife's hand. "Not true," he growled. "I heard every word. I even know the title. It was my favorite song."

Mabel looked at him out of the side of her eyes. "And what might that title be?" she asked with a bite in her voice.

"'The King Is Exhausted on High.' So there!"

Mabel breathed deeply. "The correct title, dear, is 'The King Is Exalted on High,' not 'Exhausted.' You're the one who was exhausted, Harvey, not the Lord."

Reflection

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).

Lord, I don't know about you, but I feel exhausted sometimes—mostly of my own doing. I take on too much, worry too much, and meddle too much. It's time for me to take a break from other people's business, and my own too, and just focus my attention on you, the author and finisher of all things.

Green Jell-O



You lying piece of green Jell-O!” Raymond bellowed across the room to his wife, Paulette.

“What did you say?” Paulette barked, clearly insulted and confused. Raymond looked at his wife like she’d lost her mind. Paulette popped off the sofa and ran out of the den in tears.

“What brought that on?” she asked God. “Is this it? Raymond is finally losing his mind? I know he’s hard of hearing, but this is too much. What if he becomes dangerous?”

Paulette remembered having read about a man who chased his wife of 60 years out of the house with a butcher knife. He had been failing mentally for months, but then he became violent and she had to move him to a home for people with dementia. Paulette’s thoughts raced on. Within seconds she was already planning what she’d tell their children and how their entire life would be turned upside down if Raymond were seriously mentally ill.

Paulette walked back to the den and stood in the doorway, ready to bolt if her husband lunged at her. She eyed him

suspiciously. She knew it would only make matters worse if she got upset in front of him, so she controlled herself and asked him to repeat what he said. That would give her a chance to judge his mental state and decide what to do if he repeated the same phrase.

“You’re lying on the cream pillow,” he restated slowly in a loud voice.

Paulette burst out laughing. She and Raymond had agreed they would not rest their heads on the new cream-colored decorative pillows they’d bought for their sofa because they didn’t want to stain them. Raymond was simply reminding her.

When she told him she thought he had called her a “lying piece of green Jell-O,” he nearly fell off his chair laughing.

“After that my heart calmed down, and I let go of my fantasy of nursing homes and butcher knives,” said Paulette.

“I’m not the only one around here who’s hard of hearing!” exclaimed Raymond. “Looks like our next stop is the hearing aid center. I wonder if they have a two-for-one sale?”

Reflection

Let me hear joy and gladness (Psalm 51:8).

Lord, thank you that even when I cannot hear you, you hear me and my cry for help. I pray today for the spiritual ears to hear your teachings and to apply them to my life.

Cracking the Code



Lyle, dear, I can't find the thingamajig that goes with the what-chamacallit. Any idea where you put it?"

Lyle walked into the guest bathroom, scratching his head. "The thingamajig? What the heck is that?"

Ellie's look pinned her husband to the tile wall. "What do you mean you don't know? You're the one who had it last."

Lyle crossed his arms in front of his chest. "Did not."

Ellie crossed hers. "Did too." She took a breath and stretched out her words. "Let me start over. You know," she continued, uncrossing her arms and flailing them in front of Lyle's face, "you came in from that store—you know that whozywhatsit place where you bought the whateveryoucallit thingy for this bathroom. Renae called this morning. She wants to buy one just like it. I told her I'd ask you the price and if there was a choice of color." Ellie stood her ground and didn't flinch.

"Look, dear, I can't help you if I don't know what you're talking

about. I bought a bunch of supplies at the diddleywhatsit place, and then I stopped by the—you know the store that makes me think of trains.”

Ellie blinked and knitted her brows. “The place that makes you think of trains?”

“Hmmm.” Lyle appeared determined to save face. He raised his voice. “It’s a store that sells stuff for people that like to do—you know—projects, stuff that helps with gardening and plumbing and lighting and painting.”

“And that kind of a store reminds you of trains? Do they sell miniature train sets?”

“No!” Lyle’s face turned red. “They don’t sell trains. It just reminds me of trains. You know, the place where a train goes after it’s finished with its run.”

“A train garage?” Ellie decided to try and help her husband, but she hadn’t a clue where all this was leading.

“Warm, but not hot,” said Lyle, egging her on with his fingers. “Keep going. You’re almost there.”

“What is this—a treasure hunt?” Ellie fanned her face with a hand. She had no idea how they got into this corner. There seemed to be no way out. “A train shed?”

“No, but you’re getting there, I think.”

“A depot—a train depot!”

“That’s it!” Lyle crushed Ellie to his chest. “You’re a genius. Now I can get a good night’s sleep.”

“But it’s only ten in the morning.” Ellie collapsed in her recliner. She had forgotten how all this started, and it didn’t matter anymore. Her husband needed her. He was clearly on the precipice of a mental breakdown.

Lyle threw up his hands. “Home Depot!” he shouted. “Get it? Depot!”

Ellie sighed. She was relieved, but not amused. Lyle would be okay—at least for the moment.

“Now, back to our initial conversation,” she said, lips pursed. “The one about that thingamajig that goes with the whatchamacallit. Any idea where you put it?”

“Not a clue, but if we go back to the Depot and walk up and down the aisles I’m sure we’ll find what we’re looking for. It’s bound to be there somewhere. If it has to do with bathrooms, we’ll check every doodad in every aisle until we find the hottle-dee-hoo. What do you say?”

“I say let’s go. The train is waiting.”

Reflection

Forget the former things; do not dwell
on the past (Isaiah 43:18).

Lord, thank you that even my whodlew hatsit prayers make sense to you. You are never confused by my conversations. I am so relieved to know that the Holy Spirit intercedes for me when I can't find the words I want to say.