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MY CUTE HUSBAND

One November evening, after coming home from working on the little brown house we owned in Payson, I ate some supper and went downstairs to rest, because I was very tired. By the time Tracy came home from school (about 9 p.m.), I realized that I was not only tired but that I definitely did not feel very well.

About the same time Tracy came home, our oldest son, Tracy Jr., and his wife, Betsy dropped by our home for a brief visit. After visiting with them for a few minutes, I excused myself. The "did not feel very well" had commenced into the full-blown symptoms of intestinal flu-- to which I am very susceptible, and which symptoms I battle valiantly, because I hate throwing up!

Nevertheless, by midnight I had thrown up, and I had survived, even though I thought --while the illness was running its course--that I was certainly going to die! The worst was finally over, except for the trotting and restlessness of the rest of the night.

I had been planning to go to the funeral of a ward member the next morning, but was too weak to do so. Tracy was bishop at the time, and was conducting the funeral. He had been asked, also, to speak, and I was sorry to miss hearing his talk. Right after the funeral, Tracy went back to the BYU to finish doing an experiment he had in progress. When he arrived home, he handed me the most beautifully wrapped package I have ever seen. Lovely wrapping paper in browns and oranges, for the autumn season, tied with a beautiful orange bow.

"Surprise," said he, handing it to me!

"What a lovely package," I said. "What is this for?"

"Just a gift for my lovely wife," he said.

I carefully unwrapped it. It was in a box just the size to hold a new nightgown--or a blouse--or a scarf--or a slip--and it was very light. My anticipation grew as I unwrapped it. When I finally got the box open--with the help of Tracy and his trusty pocket knife--inside was something carefully enclosed in white tissue paper--and under the tissue paper--guess what? A package of cinnamon bears--one of my favorite candies.

After I got through laughing, I quipped that it must have cost him more for the wrapping than for the gift. Isn't he a clever fellow?

And there have been other clever gifts. When President Kimball told us that we should all have backyard vegetable and fruit gardens, we decided we probably should obey the instructions of our Prophet. However, I had deliberately designed our back yard for easy maintenance, and that did not include room for a vegetable garden. Our back yard was mostly grass, with a border of flowering bushes and shrubs.

We went out in the back yard and looked the situation over. If we were to have a vegetable garden, a beautiful thornless honey Locust tree would have to be cut down to allow enough sun to reach the logical place for a small vegetable garden. We had grown that tree from a sapling! A lilac and a couple of other flowering bushes would also have to be removed. Nevertheless, we decided to be obedient. It took us some time to get that vegetable plot ready for planting. We leveled the plot with the aid of a lot of railroad ties, since our lot slopes to the south at that location, brought in some sand to put with the local clay, and bricked around the greenhouse.

The biggest problem was taking down that locust tree! I never knew locust wood was a hardwood. In fact, it was very difficult to cut through that wood. Tracy managed to bring the tree down, however, and he cut the trunk and branches into firewood length. We then removed all the wood to Tracy's tool shop yard on Columbia Lane. This was in 1975.

In 1977 all our five daughters, and our two daughters-in-law, and I received very unique valentines. Tracy had taken some of the locust logs and sawed through the whole branch or trunk, making rounds about one and a quarter inch thick, and about eight or nine inches in diameter, with the bark intact around the slices. He then sanded the rounds and drew a heart in each of them. To accent the heart, he painted around the hearts with white paint. He then inscribed a valentine verse on each and varnished the whole valentine. The wood had a beautiful grain. Mine read:

February, 1977

Dearest Ida-Rose:

My heart wood break

If you were knot

my Valentine!

Love, Tracy

All the girls' valentines had similar verses that contained references to wood. Most of the girls still have theirs, though almost all the valentines have split upon further drying. Tracy had to mail most of them, because our children were scattered all over the U.S. One of them arrived at the destination post office in two ^{pe}pieces, but the postmaster rescued the pieces, wrapped them together, and sent them on to Virginia. I guess he thought the valentine deserved getting to the recipient.

Tracy had often sent me flowers for special occasions during the years. But along the line, he built me a small greenhouse next to our vegetable garden. I ended up, after some experimentation, filling it mostly with orchids. How can a husband send flowers to a lady who has orchids--dozens of them. He found a way, though. He kept his eye out for unusual plants--orchid plants and others as well. Recently, for instance, he brought me a house plant with unusual markings on the leaves. The leaves of the plants folded upon each other at night. A visiting friend noted the plant, and informed us that it was called a prayer plant.

Another unusual gift was a three-sided rock about the size of a lemon. On one side was printed "Service Rock," and on the second side it said, "Love, for all you do for me." And on the third side he had signed his name. The rock has a special place on my desk.

Another thing he once did was not actually a gift, but a romantic gesture. One Sunday when Tracy was still our ward bishop, I was sitting in the middle of the back row by myself. Tracy, of course, was on the stand with his counselors. He usually had a deacon or a teacher sitting behind him who acted as a messenger for him. On this Sunday, he wrote a note, handed it to the boy, and whispered to him to deliver it. I thought nothing of it, for I was never the recipient of the note. This time, however, his messenger walked down from the stand, came to the back of the chapel, handed the note to the person at the end of the row I was sitting on. That person handed it to the next person, and so on, until it reached me.

When I opened the note, it said, simply, but--to me--eloquently: "I love you," Tracy. My cute husband!