

Buffet Drawer Mischief

By Jeanette Rhyan

Mom's buffet stood along the west wall in the dining room. The buffet was large and extremely heavy. It had a flat top with curved edges. Depending on the time of year, Mom always decorated the top of the buffet, and her displays always looked so nice. The bottom part of the buffet had four doors that concealed the "good" China, glass serving platters, and lots of serving bowls. The buffet also had two large drawers. One drawer held the everyday tablecloths and the silverware chest. The other drawer held all the Kodak pictures and slides, lots of greeting cards, and miscellaneous items. This was my favorite drawer.

"Jeanette, what are you doing?" Mom asked in a raised voice.

A bored ten-year-old, I very innocently replied, "Just playing with your greeting cards. The colors are so pretty."

Quickly, mom walked from the kitchen to where I had all her greeting cards spread out on the dining room floor, matching all the colors. There were lots of cards, and I was having so much fun.

Standing with hands on her hips, trying to control her voice, she asked, "What in heaven's name prompted you to take all my greeting cards out of the buffet drawer and play with them? I bought these cards to send to friends and family for different occasions." She didn't look happy.

"The cards have such pretty colors. See, these cards have silver and gold glitter. The cards in this pile have yellow and orange flowers." I held up a few cards for her to see. "The way you had the cards in the drawer was boring. I'm being very careful not to bend the corners." I don't think she liked my explanation, but I continued, "Mom, there are even a few Christmas cards that you forgot to send. I bet if I stood up a few of these cards and lined them up just so, I could touch one, and all the cards would fall like dominoes. Want me to show you?"

Mom stood there shaking her head. Very slowly, she picked up a few of the cards from the floor and laid them on the dining room table. "Jeanette, come look at the cards I have on the table." I walked to where she had pulled out a chair for me, and I sat down at the table to look at the cards.

"Let me try to explain this. I buy cards for all kinds of occasions: birthdays, anniversaries, get well, sympathy, thinking-of-you, and thank you. In the buffet drawer, the cards are arranged according to those headings. That way, it's easy for me to find a card I need to send."

She pointed to all the cards still lying on the floor. "Please find all the birthday cards, and put them in a pile." It took me a while, but I did as she instructed. "Next, find all the anniversary cards, and put them in another pile." This went on until all the cards were in different piles on the table.

Mom took all the groups of cards and carefully put them back into the buffet drawer, except the birthday cards. "Grandma's birthday is just around the corner. Do you think you can find a pretty card that we could give her?" I felt like Mom had given me a great responsibility and took my job very seriously.

Mom walked back to the kitchen. It took me awhile as I carefully spread all the birthday cards on the table. I looked at the flowers on the fronts of the cards and read some of the verses on the insides. Finally, I found a card with a big bouquet of pink and purple flowers with a ribbon that said "Happy Birthday." Taking the card to Mom, I asked, "Will this card work?"

Mom looked at the card and read the verse inside. "Thank you, Jeanette. This is the perfect card for Grandma." She set the card aside, then continued, "Please put all the birthday cards back in the drawer. Do you think you can count the cards as you put them away? I want to make sure I don't run out of birthday cards."

As I counted the cards, 45 total, I realized Mom didn't need to buy birthday cards for a long, long time.

Why do I remember this scene? I am now the family member who sends out birthday, anniversary, get-well, sympathy, and thinking-of-you cards. I may not have 45 birthday cards (I have 18) in a drawer, but I understand the joy my mom felt as she sent each greeting card.