

A MINUTE IN TIME

Memories of remodeling my husband's old homeplace flooded my soul. I laughed out loud as I recalled the look on Hubert's face when I had asked him to pick the colors for each room. Nothing could have prepared me for his choices. In our many years of marital bliss, how could I not know he was color-blind?

I can't count the number of times I've heard "Interesting colors" from friends and family. Our older daughter, Janie, often pulled me aside and pleaded with me to repaint the family room before she asked her friends over.

Hubert's tragic accident two years ago wrecked my world. Although we had visions of growing old together in his childhood home, I could not afford to keep it up on my meager income. Clearly, my only option was to prepare the place for sale. At the very least, I would need to paint the entire interior, starting with the family room.

Perhaps I should have waited for the kids to help move the heavy furniture, but I was a woman on a mission and had no time to wait for help. Besides, this time I would choose the colors for each room myself.

As expected, there was a treasure trove of goodies around and under each piece of furniture, especially his chair. His missing sock, candy wrappers, kids' tiny toys, a few clipped news articles, but no money! As I dragged his chair further away from the wall, a pop bottle rolled out. Seriously? A pop bottle under his chair? A paper plate or saucer, perhaps, or a coffee cup, but not a pop bottle.

I would have tossed the bottle right away were it not for the red ribbons inside bidding me to look more closely. As I pulled on the ribbons, they were attached to neatly folded stationery. This was weird! Already worn out from moving heavy furniture, I wilted onto the nearby sofa, my hands trembling as I began unfolding the note.

"Precious Jenny, if you are reading this ..."!

My hands went numb as the note, bottle, and ribbon fell to the floor. Unbidden tears flowed like a faucet down my warm cheeks. I found it hard to breathe as I realized what was happening. I don't know how long I sat there paralyzed. I needed to read the rest of his letter.

"Precious Jenny, if you are reading this, I have gone on before you. I will be waiting for you to come through Heaven's gates. In the meantime, there is something I have never told you ..."

More tears welled up. How am I ever going to get this read? It's as if he suddenly appeared in person; the initial grief of my loss had gained momentum. At this point, I was thankful my children weren't with me. Did he know I wouldn't call them? Had he intended for me to find this alone?

"I wanted so much to tell you sooner, but the time was never right. We had a lifetime before us. Then, as God sent us our amazing children, I set aside everything else for a more opportune time.

And now, here you are left to bear the news alone. I am so sorry we could not share this moment together. As I sit here in my favorite chair trying to write, I can picture how you must miss all the

activities we enjoyed together. I pray you will now be able to visit family across the states and perhaps travel as you always wanted. It seemed that we were always too busy with work and family obligations.

“Jenny, what I failed to tell you was, soon after we married ... “

That was the last sentence on the bottom of the page. Another neatly folded paper was still in the bottle, but I couldn't read more now. I needed to wash my face, get a drink of water, and just breathe. This was too much to take in. And what could he possibly have to say that he had not said in twenty-five years? It couldn't be good.

Finally back on the couch, I slowly unwrapped the last piece of paper.

“Jenny, sweet Jenny, soon after we were married, I opened a Swiss Bank Account in your name and ...”