

Down Home: Valentine's plans cross in the mail_20904

February 6, 2004

Posted: 2/06/04

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The best-laid Valentine's Day plan of this man and his mouse almost got tripped up by our friendly neighborhood mail carrier.

Joanna, my Valentine, called the other day and asked about a certain charge on our credit card bill from one of her favorite stores. Man, I hoped that piece of mail wouldn't come through until after Feb. 14.

Give me credit for trying hard. I began thinking about what to give Jo for Valentine's Day weeks ago. I looked in catalogs and shopped online. I considered a range of possibilities and narrowed my choices. Finally, I settled on The Gift.

Then came the hard part: When to order.

MARV KNOX <i>Editor</i>

On one hand, this store is notorious for putting merchandise on backorder. That would never do. Wrapping a *picture* of a present in a box on Valentine's Day makes about as big a splash as saying the dog ate it.

On the other hand, if I ordered too early, the credit card bill would come, and Jo would at least know where I've been shopping. That's because we have a financially transparent relationship. Correct that. My half of the relationship is transparent. Jo's the bookkeeper in our family. I never know if we've got enough in the bank to buy a pair of socks; she knows the whereabouts of every penny. So, that makes sneaking around to buy gifts sorta tricky.

Anyway, I went online and took the risk. A couple of clicks of my computer mouse, and the gift was on its way. Unfortunately, so was the credit card bill, which arrived at home two days after the gift arrived at my office.

The phone rang. "What's this about a charge from (blah-blah-blah) on our MasterCard bill?" Jo asked.

"Can't say right now. I'm busy," I replied, stalling as my heart sank.

After work, I pondered what to say about Jo's Valentine gift. I settled on a straightforward approach: "About that credit card bill, why don't you pretend you never saw it? I'm not good at sneaking around to buy you gifts, but my heart's in the right place. I tried hard this year—started early and everything. But you know how they are about putting stuff on backorder, and I wanted your gift to get here on time. So, even if you figure everything out, just remember it's coming from the guy who loves you more than life itself, and when you open the box, act surprised."

I rehearsed that speech all the way home, but as soon as I started, my smart Valentine offered two words of wisdom: "Let's not talk about it. And why don't you get your own credit card and have the bill sent to your office?"

Well, Valentine's Day is almost here, and I hope Jo hasn't guessed what I got her. I haven't prayed about it, because I figure the Lord doesn't really care what I buy for her as long as I'm a faithful and loving husband and

daddy.

What's she getting me? Maybe a credit card.

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