

# **The Things we Keep**

**By**

**Dorothy Rosby**

Do you ever worry that someday when you're long gone, your children and grandchildren will go snooping through your home, searching for heirlooms and other valuables? They'll open a closet and be knocked to the ground by all the junk you've collected over the years--a testament to your wasted life? Then they'll realize that, just as they'd suspected, you really were quite unstable all along, and that yes, they should go ahead and contest your will. You DON'T worry about that? I do.

I even worry that someone snooping through my home right now might decide I'm unstable. It's not that I'm a collector exactly. I actually find it therapeutic to give away or dispose of belongings--especially my family's belongings. But there are a few things that I just can't part with.

For example, I still have scrapbooks from my college days, and I didn't just go to college yesterday. Along with the usual ticket stubs and fortunes from fortune cookies, my scrapbooks also contain page after page of small cardboard circles taken off the top of a particular brand of yogurt. If you're ever snooping through my stuff, you might wonder why I saved those. I wonder why I saved those. At least I know that at one point in my life, I was getting plenty of calcium.

I have more cookbooks than Rachael Ray and when you come across them, you're going to wonder why I keep them since I cook the same six meals over and over.

I have a bag full of widowed socks, some whose partners were probably lost in my last home which I left twelve years ago. I have a cupboard full of lids that don't fit

any of the bowls I own and bowls that don't fit any of the lids I own. I don't toss the bowls or the lids or the socks because I'm sure that if I ever do, their partners will show up shortly thereafter, having taken twelve years to walk the six blocks from my old home.

I keep a variety of inspirational quotations and messages meant to motivate me to become the person I want to be. When you're digging through my stuff, you might wonder what kind of person that is, especially since I doctored a few of them. For example, there's the one that says, "You are what you think about." And I sincerely believe that, but somewhere along the way, I added, "So stop thinking about Cheetos."

I have a file filled with rejections from editors. Rejections are kind of a badge of honor for a writer--a badge with a faulty pin that stabs you right in the heart, but a badge nonetheless. If you snoop around my house very long, you're bound to discover that more editors have said no to me than have said yes. Unfortunately, you will have no way of knowing that those who said yes are just smarter people. Probably better looking too.

I have a file cabinet filled with scraps of paper containing cryptic, handwritten notes intended for use in future columns. Out of context these may seem peculiar to you--even in context they might seem peculiar. For example, "Do dental hygienists get cavities and what does it do to their credibility if they do?" And "Be kind to everyone you meet; you never know who might win the lottery next."

My only comfort is that if you happen to stumble upon these notes while you're snooping through my house, you won't be able to read my handwriting anyway. So you won't realize that I'm only being nice to you because you might win the lottery someday. SORRY! That was mean, wasn't it? That's what you get for snooping through my stuff.

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