

# MY BETTER HALF

BY LORRY MYERS

I STOOD in the valentine aisle at the store searching the Husband category. I picked up one card after the other, only to put them back after reading the words. Many of the cards were addressed to “Hubby” or “Sweetheart” or—even better—“To my better half.” There were rustic cards and cartoon cards, and some with fish on the front. None of them seemed to say what I wanted to say.

Who writes these anyway?

When we first married, my husband, Randy, didn't quite understand the importance of choosing the right card. Even though the calendar informs him weeks in advance of a birthday or anniversary or even Valentine's Day, he still puts off buying cards and then makes a mad dash to the store at closing time, snatching the gaudiest one and calling it good to go.

*Even though we are far apart  
Separated by miles and miles  
I hope my warm affection  
Brings you many smiles.*

This card has a bright white dove flying over the mountain with a red velvet heart in its beak. It was the first valentine my husband gave to his new wife, and later, Randy confided that he never read the words. He just liked the picture.

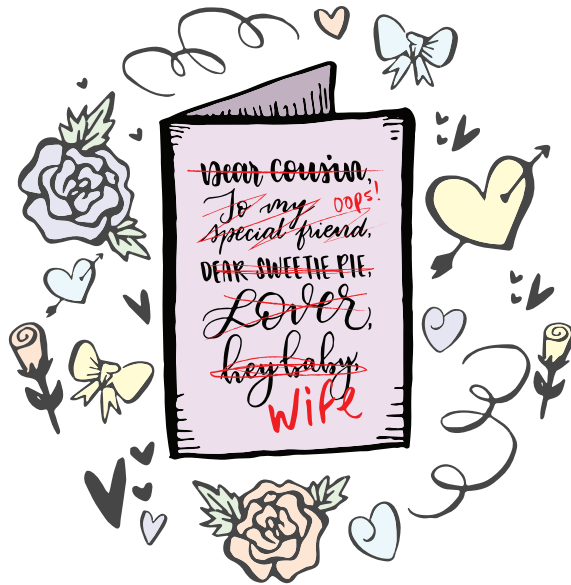
And who could forget this one?

*Cousin, you are thought about  
More than I can say.  
Know that you are in my heart  
Each and every day.*

This card cost Randy a whopping five dollars and was laden with gold foil, a flashy way of showing that nothing was too good for his wife ... or his cousin. This card was strategically placed in front of the cash register at the convenience store, guaranteed to catch the eye of a desperate man on a mission.

How convenient!

Then my birthday rolled around and “My



Better Half” planned ahead and bought me a card on his way home from work. The envelope seal was still wet, quickly licked as he was walking in the door.

*To a special friend:  
May the year ahead be better  
Than the one before,  
Until we meet up yonder  
And claim our just rewards.*

Randy didn't read the card until he was sitting in front of the house ready to sign with an ink pen he'd dug out of the glove box. Mr. Thoughtful then thoughtfully crossed out “special friend” and wrote “oops” above it. He then sheepishly explained to me that it was the only good card at the gas station.

As if I didn't know.

It can sometimes feel like torture to buy a greeting card. So many rows, so many categories, so many pretty pictures that the words are hard to find. Silly cards that rhyme, battery ones that sing, pricey ones that don't say anything at all. Why don't cards ever speak the words we would say ourselves?

*My dear, the road is rocky,  
No one said it wouldn't be.  
But at the end of every day,  
Aren't you glad that you have me!*

Randy presented this valentine with flair, bragging that this time, he'd searched the cards and picked this one in the Humor section, under Wife.

I was not amused.

Instead, I was ready.

My husband was not the only one who had searched the card store—rather the liquor store—for the perfect valentine.

*Darling, when I married  
The man who I selected,  
I have to tell you this, my dear,  
It's not what I expected!*

After he read it out loud, my stunned husband looked up at me with something that resembled fear in his eyes. I quickly made it all right by saying the card was the biggest one in the liquor store and since it was the only one they had, there wasn't much reason to read it. Then I pointed out that the valentine was adorned with gold glitter and cost more than my lunch.

“Plus,” I said, “I really like the picture.”

After that February lesson, Randy's card-buying skills improved. No more “across the miles” or “dear cousin” or “special friend” valentines for me.

There is now a simple beauty to the cards he gives me. My favorite ones are blank inside, where Randy supplies the words scribbled in his own hand with space enough for him to say all I need to hear.

I am worth it all.

*Lorry Myers writes  
from her home in central  
Missouri. Write her at  
LorrysStories@gmail.com.*



LORRY MYERS

# THE SOUNDS OF VACATION

BY LORRY MYERS

**FOR MANY REASONS**, we always take our summer vacation in August. One memorable year, my husband and I flew with my parents to meet my sister at an oceanside resort in Texas. The weather turned wet and the rental car quit, so we spent most of our time in the hotel bar, watching the dark waves and tipping the piano player. At the airport, our flight was delayed and we missed our connector, so by the time we landed in Kansas City, it was long after midnight and we still had a three-hour drive home.

I was over it.

Right before we left on this trip, my father was fitted—or rather, ill-fitted—with new dentures, and on the flight home he was convinced that they were going to fall out. To ensure they stayed put, he began pushing his tongue against the roof of his mouth, creating an annoying kind of clicking sound that, apparently, only I could hear.

*Thtt. Thtt.*

Sometimes, the little things can turn into big things—this noise was one of those.

“Dad,” I asked, with a hint of impatience. “Why are you making that noise?”

“What?” he replied. “What?”

*Thtt. Thtt.*

The cool Texas weather followed us to Missouri, so when I huddled with my mother awaiting the parking shuttle, I noticed she had developed a case of the sniffles.

*Sniff. Sniff.*

In the quietness of the shuttle bus, I frantically dug in my purse to find one lonely tissue and handed it to my mother.

“Mom, here’s a Kleenex,” I said, disappointed when she delicately dabbed her nose and tucked it away.

*Sniff. Sniff.*

It was the wee hours of the morning when we finally found our vehicle and loaded our



luggage. My husband, the driver, made a quick stop at a convenience store, needing a dose of caffeine to help him wake up and shake off the desire to lie down. Before Randy could take one drink, he started to yawn.

*AHHH. Ahhh. Aaaa.*

Randy has always been an exuberant yawner who throws back his head and lets it rip in three different octaves. Tonight was no different.

*AHHH. Ahhh. Aaaa.*

On the interstate, we rode in silence, me foolishly believing that the sound of the highway might lull my parents to sleep and quiet the teeth clicking and double sniffing. It had been a long day of travel, and I was sure they were anxious to get home and lay their heads down.

I know I was.

Just when I was beginning to nod off, the yawning started again; Randy’s coffee had not yet kicked in.

*AHHH. Ahhh. Aaaa.*

Then from the back seat, I heard my Dad, still fussing with those teeth.

*Thtt. Thtt.*

Immediately after, my mother chimed in.

*Sniff. Sniff.*

Now that I had heard this little chorus, I couldn’t un-hear it.

*AHHH. Ahhh. Aaaa.*

*Thtt. Thtt.*

*Sniff. Sniff.*

Are you kidding me?

I turned on the radio, thinking that would help.

*AHHH. Ahhh. Aaaa.*

*Thtt. Thtt.*

*Sniff. Sniff.*

Soon, they were blending harmony with the Golden Oldies.

*AHHH. Ahhh. Aaaa.*

*Thtt. Thtt.*

*Sniff. Sniff.*

That was it. I’d had all I could stand, and I couldn’t stand anymore. Apparently, I had spent way too much time with these people, and all those little things were turning out to be too big to ignore.

“Stop! Everyone, you have got to stop!” I shrieked, hands in praying formation.

“Exactly what I was thinking!” Dad shouted from the backseat. “There is a little ol’ truck stop up the road. Let’s stop and have some pie.”

So that’s what we did—pulled over and had pie, like it wasn’t the middle of the night and we weren’t tired and ready to be home. I sat across from my father, and by the time I was done with that slice of banana cream, I had forgotten all about loose teeth and summer colds and loud, late-night yawns.

Maybe those things weren’t so big after all.

My father passed a few years ago, and what I wouldn’t give this August to be riding with my parents on a summer vacation. We’d take our time and stop for pie and sleep when we got home. We would remember all the little things that made our vacations so memorable.

*Thtt. Thtt.*

I miss those little things.

Lorry Myers writes from her home in central Missouri. Write her at [LorrysStories@gmail.com](mailto:LorrysStories@gmail.com).



LORRY MYERS

KATH TEOLI

"Mom," I asked, my voice quivering over the word. "What do you remember about the day I was born?"

# Happy Birthday to Me!



By LORRY MYERS

**The whole** thing started when I requested a statement of earnings from the Social Security Administration. The paperwork was simple—name, address, Social Security number, and birth date. I mailed the form, then forgot about it.

A month later, I received a phone call informing me that: a) I had provided false information on a government form, which, by the way, is a felony; or b) I had made an error because the birth date on my request didn't match the date on the official government record. I repeated my birth date to the overly serious caller, who informed me that date was wrong.

When I protested, I was sternly advised to check my birth certificate.

After a frantic search, I finally found my birth certificate. According to that official document, the September date I celebrate my birth was not really my birth date. I grabbed my keys and drove to my mother's house, thinking all kinds of crazy things. When I walked into her house, I didn't waste any time.

"Mom," I asked, my voice quivering over the word. "What do you remember

about the day I was born?"

My mother seemed to have her facts in order, right down to the minute of my birth and how much I weighed. I handed her my birth certificate and pointed out the date. My mother's eyes grew wide as she read and then re-read her fourth child's birth certificate, apparently for the first time. Only one single fact on my birth certificate matched my mother's memories—the month.

The month of September.

"Ridiculous!" Mom declared. "We know who you are; this is a clerical error."

But what if this is more than that? What if my parents brought the wrong baby home from the hospital? What if who I am is not who I really am? What if someone else out there is me? I had to find out.

I started with the county hospital in Missouri where I was born, and then contacted the doctor's office. I managed to convince both to find the hospital file and birth record that would prove when I was born—whoever I am.

Finally we had proof; Mom was right, and the birth certificate was wrong.

When September rolled around, my husband was in a quandary over which day was my real birthday. Which date was right? Randy wasn't about to ask.

On my birth certificate birth date, Randy had a present for me, and I thought how sweet he was to give me a birthday gift in celebration of the wrong date. Then when my correct birth date followed, my mother threw my official birthday party. Everyone there had a gift for me.

Everyone but my husband.

The next year on the wrong birth date in September, my mother brought over a birthday cake in remembrance of the old me. Randy panicked thinking he'd once again missed my birthday.

"Which day in September is it?" Randy wailed, running his hands through his hair.

So, the next September and the September after that and every September since, my never-certain husband gives me two birthday gifts on two different dates just to make sure he is covered. Randy remains ever uncertain which date is the official date, and quite frankly, I don't see any good reason to change.



LORRY MYERS  
BIRTHDAY GIRL