Romantic Hyperbole: A Humorous Look at Honesty in Love

It seemed like a good idea at the time.

It would be a great way to express my enduring affection for my wife. I would find seven romantic birthday cards and give one to Meg each day for a week, starting on her birthday. It would continue a sweet tradition begun before we married.

Each card would have a simple picture that would tenderly convey our feelings for one another. Inside would be an endearing slogan or affirmation to which I would add a personal expression of my love for her.

I didn’t foresee that Day Three would bring an ethical dilemma.

I carefully selected the cards and arranged them in an appropriate sequence. Day One showed a cute puppy with a pink rose. Inside: “You’re the one I love.”

Day Two featured a picture of a little boy and girl in a meadow with their arms over each other’s shoulders. The slogan: “Happy Birthday to my favorite playmate.”

Day Three depicted a beautiful tropical sunset: bluish pink sky, vast ocean, silhouetted palm trees. You could almost feel the balmy breeze. Inside: “Paradise is anywhere with you”, to which I added personal mention of places holding special memories for us: an island vacation spot, a North Carolina hotel, our home.

I completed the remaining cards, dated the envelopes, and planned to bestow one card each morning of her birth week. Then reality happened.

You see, I had agreed to go camping with her for Days One and Two. Camping is something Meg thrives on—outdoor living, clean air, hiking, camp fires. It's in her blood. Camping is something I did in Boy Scouts—dust, mosquitoes, noisy campers, smelly latrines. It ranks just below root canals on my list of favorites.

We camped at a state park only fifteen minutes from our home. On her birthday morning, she liked the fluffy puppy. Day Two, the cute kids made her smile. So far, so good.

Meanwhile, I was tolerating camping, doing my best to keep my attitude positive. The food was OK; the bugs were scarce. After two days, I was ready to go home as planned. Meg wanted to stay an extra day. We each got our wish.

Once home and alone, I pulled out Meg's card for "Day Three," the one with the tropical sunset and the "paradise is anywhere with you" slogan.

Should I give her the card? I had chosen to leave the campground. "But," I reasoned with myself, "the slogan was true lots of the time."

I settled on a compromise, a post-it note on the envelope explaining, "You may find that this card contains just a bit of romantic hyperbole."

Might giving it a clever-sounding label defuse my hypocrisy?

The echoes of her laughter still reverberate through our home. I got off easy.

"Speak the truth to each other," wrote a Jewish sage. "Speak. . . . the truth in love," advocated a first-century biblical writer. Wise advice for just about any relationship.

"Romantic hyperbole" has become a humorous gauge of truthfulness in our relationship, a test for honesty. Neither of us enjoys every location on earth. She feels some sporting

events are a waste of time. I can get bored at shopping malls. But as long as we are honest with each other about our feelings, the bond seems to grow stronger.

That’s no hyperbole.

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