

THE CABINET

“Jonathan,” yelled the boy’s mother. “That’s’ all you do, run around all the time. Stop it! Sit still for a while.”

She called him Jonathan when she was at her wits end with his antics, which was the case now. At other times she just called him Jon.

After a moment of quiet, she added “Jon, why don’t you come over here and help me get the plates ready to put into a cabinet that’s coming today.”

With that, the boy came running over. He was an energetic young man of eight, inquisitive, always on the move, and never still for any length of time. But he had a kind heart and a loving nature, especially for his mother.

“What cabinet, mom?” said Jonathan as he smiled and watched his mother take the plates out of the cramped kitchen cabinet over the sink and stack them on the counter.

“I got tired of this cramped space for our dinner plates and glasses. I wanted to get a new cabinet to hold them but they cost so much. Then last week I saw an ad for a cabinet that would be just right and was reasonable, so I bought it. It’s used, but the ad said “in good condition” and it was for something we can afford, only fifty dollars. Maybe now I’ll stop chipping the plates,” and she smiled back at him as he started helping her stack the plates on the counter and then arrange the glasses there as well.

When they had finished she told him, “Good job. Now all we have to do is to wait till it comes. The e-mail said it would be delivered today at four o’clock.”

When four o’clock came and went and no delivery men rang the doorbell Annie decided to call up the seller and find out what happened. She found the e-mail that acknowledged receipt of the money order she sent—the ad said no checks or credit cards—but there was no phone number, only a company name and a post office address.” *Looks like I’ve been conned out of fifty dollars* and she shook her head in disgust.

At five-thirty she decided to get over it by taking Jonathan for some fast food. “Let’s go for a burger, Jon,” she said. “Would you like that?”

The boy came running over with a big smile on his face. They but on their jackets and opened the front door to leave. And there it was, a big box marked “Cabinet for home delivery.”

“Well that’s nice,” said Annie. “They just leave it on the doorstep. And they don’t even ring the bell. But at least it’s here. Help me drag it inside, Jon, and then we’ll go get those burgers.”

An hour or so later, they were home, and Annie started to open the box. Jonathan was running around the house with a wooden sword in his hand and a piece of the cardboard that Annie had

ripped off the package as a shield. And of course he was making lots of noise, but this time, Annie didn't seem to mind.

"Jon!" said Annie, "I could really use some help. Why don't you put that down and come over here."

Jonathan ran up to her and started hitting the cardboard that was still on the box with his sword. "Stop that!" she said. "I asked you to help me, not to break the cabinet."

"Sorry, mom," said Jonathan and he started pulling apart the rest of the cardboard box with her. Then they removed the bubble wrap, which Jonathan kept stepping on to make a popping noise and then the thick plastic coating around the cabinet itself. With that, Jonathan was off playing with his sword.

"Well, they really want to make sure this cabinet is not damaged in transit," she said out loud. "Now we'll finally get to see what we got for fifty dollars."

The cabinet was plain wood with no fancy designs or coloring. It measured four feet high, four feet wide, and two feet deep, with one shelf for the middle that could be adjusted to any height inside. *At least it's a light colored wood she thought. Must be pine wood. I hope it doesn't fall apart right away. Oh well, you get what you pay for.*

"Jon, come here! Take a look!" she called. "And you can help me push it to that space in the kitchen next to the fridge."

Jonathan came running over and said "Wow."

"Do you like it?" asked his mother.

Jonathan nodded and then the two of them pushed it into place and then he was off running around again with his sword and shield and dueling with some imagined foe that he kept killing, but not without some more screaming to go along with it.

Annie fixed the shelf in the middle of the cabinet. *The bottom will be for the plates, she thought, and the top for the glasses,* and she started stacking the plates on the floor just outside the open cabinet. When she had finished she paused, sat down on the floor next to the plates and stared at them. It wasn't long before Jonathan ran over to her.

"What you doing, mom?" he asked and, as he went to sit down next to her, his wooden sword smacked hard against the top of cabinet.

"Now you've done it," yelled Annie. "It's probably ruined. The wood is so flimsy," and she stood up to examine the damage.

"Sorry mom. I didn't mean it," said Jonathan and he started to cry.

But when Annie looked at the top of the cabinet where the sword had struck, there was no dent, in fact no mark at all. “We’re lucky,” she said. “So you can stop crying. It’s alright,” and she sat down next to him again and gave him a hug.

Jonathan stopped crying immediately and gave her a smile. “I love you, mom,” he said. “So what are you doing?”

“Oh, I was just remembering that your grandmother gave these plates to me and your father when we were married. I loved them then and still do. But there are a lot of chipped ones now. I was just wishing they were new again.” She sighed. “Well, anyway, let’s get them in there. I’ll hand these to you and you stack them in the back on that side,” and she pointed to one corner. “Ok?”

“Ok!” said Jonathan and he took the plate she handed him and placed it in the back of the cabinet.

“Mom,” he said. “There are small words burned into the back of the cabinet up near the top. What do they mean?”

“Probably says who made the cabinet,” said Annie. “It’s not important. Let’s keep going!”

When they had finished stacking all the plates, it was time for Jonathan’s bath. “Thanks for all that help,” said Annie. “I couldn’t have done it without your help. I’ll run your bath now. Go get the toys you want to play with and get over to the bathroom.”

As Annie was filling the tub, Jonathan kept running past the bathroom door. “That’s enough, now,” said Annie. “It’s time to get in the tub.”

But instead of stopping, Jonathan kept running by, looking at her and giggling as he past.

Annie called to him to come for his bath several times more, but he just kept running past the door. After a few minutes, Annie stood outside the door blocking his path. As he tried to run around her, she grabbed his arm, shook him a little and dragged him inside the bathroom.

“You never listen when I tell you to stop,” she yelled as she knelt down and undressed him.

All the time, Jonathan kept laughing.

“It’s not funny,” she said. “Why do you do this to me? Do you want to get me angry all the time? I just don’t know what to do with you.”

Jonathan stopped laughing and put his arms around his mother. “I’m sorry, mom,” he said. “I love you.”

Annie stopped and put her arms around him. “I know you do,” she said quietly. “I love you too,” and she lifted him and placed him inside the tub.

The next day Annie got Jonathan up and dressed, they ate breakfast together and then were out the door, Annie to drop Jonathan off at school and then to her part time job. At the end of her day, she picked Jonathan up from school and went back home.

She got everything ready for dinner and decided there was still a little time left to put some glasses in the cabinet.

She put the glasses that were still on the counter onto the floor next to the cabinet and sat down next to them. Then she opened the cabinet. As she looked at the stacked plates she paused, stared at them, and took one out. The chip she was sure was at the edge of the plate was gone. It was as good as when it was new. *I was sure this one had a chip on it she thought. I guess I was wrong. It must have been some of the other ones.*

Annie took out another plate and again there was no chip. Then another and then another. Finally they were all on the floor and all the chips were gone. They looked like she just had gotten them from her mother. *How can this be she thought?*

Just then Jonathan came running over wearing his baseball shirt and cap and decided to slide next to her. He came to a halt but not before his foot hit one of the glasses. The glass fell onto a plate and a crack appeared on the rim. And there was a chip on the edge of the plate the glass hit.

“Jonathan,” she yelled. “Why? Why do you do things like that? What’s wrong with you? You have to stop running. Why can’t you just sit still sometimes?”

“Sorry mom,” said Jonathan. “I didn’t mean it. I’ll fix it.”

“It can’t be fixed,” said Annie as she shook her head. “I wish it could be fixed. Those glasses were also a gift from your grandma. All this time I never broke one. Now you did.”

The boy looked at her and started crying. “I’m sorry,” he said again through his tears.

Annie looked at him, pulled him towards her and gave him a hug. “It’s ok,” she said. “Nothing is meant to last forever I guess. Something will always get broken.”

“Do you want to help me put the plates away again?”

The boy nodded, wiped away his tears and smiled and she started handing him the plates. She gave him the newly chipped plate last and told him to put it on top of the stack like that one.

When they finished with the plates, she told him it was time for dinner and that she would do the glasses while he was in the bath.

So while Jonathan was in the tub playing with his toys, Annie knelt in front of the cabinet and started putting the glasses inside, stacking them in neat rows. At the back of one of the rows she

laid the glass with the crack on its side. *No sense tossing it she thought. It'll lay it down back here. It'll keep the row even and I wouldn't use it by mistake.*

Even though there had been fewer visitors since her husband abandoned them two years ago, she still invited friends over sometimes and was proud to take out those plates and glasses on those occasions despite the chips. *I guess one less wine glass is no big deal she thought. And maybe it'll get fixed too.*

She decided to shrug off the episode with the chips on the dishes. She couldn't explain it and decided to try to figure it out some other time. Anyway, only nice things were happening, nothing bad.

The next morning, they went through their usual routine for the day and then came back home after job and school were done. While Jonathan was running through the house playing cowboy with a broom for a horse, Annie went to the cabinet to check on the glasses. As she looked at the row on the top shelf where she had placed the cracked glass, she noticed that all the glasses in that row were upright.

Annie took out one glass at a time from that row and when she reached the last one there was no crack. She smiled. *I can't believe it she thought. I don't know what's happening but I can't complain when things are all getting fixed.*

Then she looked at the plate that was chipped, but it still had the chip on the edge.

She leaned back and landed on her rear end in front of the cabinet. *I guess it only works once she thought.*

As she was sitting there in front of the cabinet, Jonathan came running by and as he made a quick turn right next to her, the end of the broom struck the cabinet, hard enough to knock over some glasses and bang some plates together. The fallen glasses cracked and some plates had new chips on them.

“Jonathan!” she yelled and got up and grabbed him. As she held him, she yelled “Why do you do these things? Why? I wish you would just be still and stop moving all the time.”

Jonathan looked at his mother and started crying. “I’m sorry mom!” he said through his tears. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean it.”

Annie shook her head, and pulled the boy close to her. “I’m sorry too,” she said after a moment, “sorry for yelling. I know you don’t do these things on purpose. It’s just that I have so much pressure on me since your father left. I know it was an accident. Ok? I’m sure someday you’ll learn to sit still.”

“I’m glad it’s ok, mom” said Jonathan as he wiped away his tears. Then he looked at the cabinet. “What were you doing when I had that accident?”

“I was noticing that the glass that broke yesterday was all fixed. Somehow it seems the cabinet can fix things.”

“Can it fix anything?” said Jonathan.

“Maybe it can,” said his mother.

“How can it do that?” said Jonathan

“Perhaps it’s magic,” said Annie. “Somehow it fixes things and makes them right.

“Can it fix the things I broke just now?” said Jonathan

“I’m not sure it can fix them this time. It fixed the plates the first time but didn’t fix that chipped plate from yesterday. But we’ll try and see what happens. Now let’s eat, get into the bath, and go to bed early.”

Jonathan nodded. “Sounds like the cabinet can do good things,” he said

Yes!” said Annie. “It seems it does good things.”

The next day Annie got up and went to wake Jonathan. But he wasn’t in his bed. She called his name, but there was no answer. She looked in the living room, thinking perhaps he couldn’t sleep and was watching television, but no. He hadn’t. She opened the front door and called his name. No one came.

Perhaps he wandered off she thought. I’m too hard on him. Maybe I should call the police.

She went into the kitchen to get the phone and saw all the plates and glasses on the floor outside the cabinet. And the middle shelf was off to the side.

She slowly walked over to the cabinet, hoping Jonathan was just hiding inside. “Jon?” she said as she opened the doors. She saw Jonathan inside but instinctively knew something was wrong. He was sitting up leaning against one side of the cabinet with a smile on his face and his legs stretched out. But he wasn’t moving. She reached in to shake him but when she touched him, she pulled her hand back. He didn’t have flesh. What she touched was more like cloth, a cloth stuffed with something soft.

Annie started trembling, shaking her head and saying “no,” “no,” over and over. As she reached inside to take out the body she notice the writing on the upper back wall that Jonathan had pointed out, and she began to sob uncontrollably.

It read “When the doors to this cabinet are open, be very careful what you wish for.”