

Possibilities in the hardware store

Little known fact. I love hardware stores. When I was a girl, I'd tag along with my dad to the local hardware store a few miles from our house. My fascination with hardware stores grew from being that little girl walking down the store aisles, smelling the sharp odor of turpentine, seeing the bins of bolts and screws, the small washers and nuts in little drawers, and the overwhelming abundance of stuff. It didn't hurt that the scent of the deli next door wafted through the walls.

There were so many interesting objects in that hardware store, none of which I knew what to do with. It was years before I realized that my father didn't know what to do with most of the objects either. But we bought what was needed for whatever was broken in the house and he would attempt the project. It never bothered me if the hot water tap became the cold water tap. The point was that my dad "fixed" it. Like many men, my dad had his list of projects and the nerve to try to do them.

Kind of like me. I've got the nerve to try most any project. How hard can it be to change all the door knobs in the house? (Harder than I thought.) How hard can it be to paint the kitchen red? (Not so hard, just be prepared for extra coats of paint.) How hard can it be to paint the TV stand Safari Beige? (Easy until you kick over the partially used gallon of paint on the carpet.) How hard can it be to hang a new light fixture in the kitchen? (Hard and heavy, even after you turn off the right circuit breaker.)

Nowadays, I look forward to my trips to any hardware store – the local family-owned one as well as the big chain ones. They



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seem to be full of possibilities. Maybe I'll build something, I think walking down the lumber aisle. Maybe I can lay some hardwood floor in the dining room, I think walking in the flooring section. Maybe I could buy a heavy vise to crack open my black walnuts, I think in the tool section. Maybe a miter box would come in handy one day. And then there are the tools and other objects that are simply a mystery. I touch them and look at what the labels say they are for some clue as to their purpose.

Despite the mysteries, I do most of my own projects. And I own a fair number of tools. A few hammers, a ton of screw drivers, wrenches, a couple of drills, a bunch of saws for all sorts of materials, nails and screws of every length and width, metric and non metric socket wrenches, needle-nose pliers, levels, tape measures and even a stud finder (and yes, I got that just for the fun of asking for it).

And being without a handy man around here, I get to arrange things just the way they make sense. I have an old dresser in the garage to house my hardware supplies. The drawers are clearly labeled: Tools; Sharp Things; Things that Attach; Screws/



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Nails; Ropes and Straps; and, Miscellaneous Weird; and Gizmos. Why not make it easy to find things?

Today I had a few projects to do around the house so a trip to the hardware store was imperative. I admit that I like to ask fellow shoppers for project advice. There's a certain look to the fella that knows what he's doing. And it's not hard to get such a guy to explain the difference between a hex bolt and a wood screw, a lug nut and a washer, or a vise grip and wrench. There seem to be some people that just know how to do everything. Maybe their dads took them along to the hardware store when they were young.

I loaded up a cart with what I needed. But I also left the store with a few things I didn't need. Clamps. Some interesting-looking hooks. Incredibly strong glue. White duct tape. Things that seem to have possibility.

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