

Minding My Own Business
by Janice Thompson

Chapter Eight

Deanna soon grew weary with making jams and jellies and found herself with dozens of jars that didn't sell. She pawned off several to reluctant family members and neighbors.

No great loss. She filled her cupboards with the delectable stuff and promised Jared she'd give away every leftover jar for Christmas. Secretly, she wished she hadn't spent the money on the ingredients. And for that matter, she wished she could take back some of the fabrics she'd purchased for her clothing design business, too. The makeup. . .well, after extended correspondence with the not-so-friendly folks at Earth's Own, she'd finally been reimbursed. Thankfully.

Still, the bills continued to mount, and Deanna prayed diligently about whether or not to find a job. Every time she thought of leaving the kids in daycare or with her mother she felt sick. The idea of being a stay-at-home mom felt right. But would Jared agree? If so, how long would their finances hold out?

One Saturday in early June, Jared took the children to the park and Deanna thoroughly cleaned her dining room and kitchen, removing everything related to her business ventures. She looked at the wall with the purple handprints and sighed. Now that the room was so clean, it stood out more than ever.

With renewed vigor, Deanna went to the garage to fetch a can of paint. She grabbed a roller and a brush and got to work. In less than an hour the wall looked fantastic. Surely Jared would be impressed when he returned home.

A rap on the door interrupted her thoughts. She opened it to discover Shelly Jo. "Hi stranger." Her neighbor grinned. "Can I come in?"

"Of course."

They sat at the kitchen table, looking at the freshly painted wall.

"I'm so sorry my girls messed up your kitchen." Shelly Jo apologized.

"No, it's totally my fault." Deanna shrugged. "And I didn't mind repainting. In fact, I love it. I love everything about decorating."

Shelly Jo flashed an admiring smile. "You've been like that ever since I met you—and it really shows in your house. Your decorating skills are the best."

"Really?" Deanna looked around with renewed interest. Sure, she'd carefully selected her drapes and other décor, but. . .a decorator?

"Corey and I wanted to repaint our master bedroom and paper the master bath, but now that I'm working full-time, I just can't seem to get around to it." Her eyes lit up. "Say, I have an idea. Why don't I pay you to do it?"

"Are you serious? You want me to decorate your house?"

"Sure. Why not? I'll give you a key and you can come over whenever it's convenient. Bring the kids. And I'll pay you whatever you think is fair."

Deanna's thoughts shifted at once to the Proverbs 31 woman. "*She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.*" As much as Deanna wanted to rest from her labors, she could not. If Shelly Jo needed her help, she would dive right in.

Jared and the kids arrived home from the park to find the house spotless and the kitchen wall re-painted. Jared looked at Deanna with newfound admiration. "Wow, you're really good. And fast."

"Thanks." She gave him a kiss on the cheek. "And you'll never guess what happened while you were gone!"

A sense of dread settled in as she unveiled her latest get-rich-quick venture—decorating. Should he tell her the truth—that her ideas were costing the family more than they were worth?

One look into her excited blue eyes and his heart melted. If she wanted to be a decorator. . .well, a decorator she would be.

