

**Excerpt from the Award-Winning Book**

**“THE SURVIVAL GUIDE: HOME REMODELING”**

**“AN ALMOST-PERFECT PROJECT”**

**A short story about one family’s remodeling adventure**

**By**

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It also feels good to have productive meetings with positive results. Tom and Patty arrived at my office on Wednesday evening at 6:30. Rosanne had put everything I needed on the table in the “reference room,” where I have bookshelves full of product literature and drawers full of samples.



After Tom and Patty left at 8:45, when Jay and I were having dinner, he asked me how the meeting went.

“Wonderful. They were excited about the preliminary plans. They loved seeing the quick perspectives, every time we talked about a change.”

“How many changes did you make?”

“We now have four alternate kitchen plans, two or three master bathroom plans. They decided that Cindy doesn’t need a tub in her bathroom -- a large shower with lots of room for all of her bottles. You thought I had a lot of hair and body care products, and makeup; you ought to see what Cindy has!”

The next morning, I told Rosanne all about my meeting with Patty and Tom, especially about the products they’d chosen.

Rosanne looked at the list. “Uh-oh. They’re already starting to go over budget. They know that, right?”

“Oh, yes. We talked about that for almost an hour. That’s why I’d like you to get the preliminary spreadsheet finished ASAP, so you can send them a copy. I want them to think about their options. They both agree it’s hard to draw the line between what they need and what they want. I set another appointment with them for next Wednesday, same time, at their home. I’d like to recommend some alternatives then that might help the budget.”



By the following Wednesday, Rosanne had entered all the data into the spreadsheet, and we’d completed the list of alternative choices for my meeting with Patty and Tom.

“You can see how the different products compare,” I said as the three of us were studying the spreadsheet. “There’s not that much difference between the fancier ‘professional’ gas cooktop and the ‘regular’ gas cooktop. Higher btu’s and heavier look. Difference of \$500 for that one item.”

“Wow! Anything is going to be better than that old electric cooktop I use now.”

“Right. And then, you’re not locked into the more expensive hood. That’s another thousand dollars or so you can save.”

"Geez, when I saw this stuff in the magazine, I wasn't aware how much it'd cost. Magazines really don't give price breakdowns, do they?"



"No. They might tell you the brand name, and you're supposed to do the homework, to get prices. You're supposed to do homework about quality and reliability, too. Almost everything is based on appearance."

Tom voiced his opinion, "That's one thing that bothers me. Patty gets all excited about something she sees in a magazine, like the cooktops. Not much difference between the way they cook?"

"Nope. Everyone thinks they've got to have high btu's, but they don't. It's only a difference of three or four thousand btu's per burner -- 12,000 versus 15,000. That means a difference of maybe a minute or so to boil pasta water. I've had a couple of clients who wanted a professional wok. It puts out 32,000 btu's -- a flame about 9 inches high. I mean, how fast do people want to burn their food?"

We were making good progress on the products until the bidet subject came up again, just as Chuck was walking through the dining room, munching on his evening snack.

"Let's see how much this thing costs, then we can decide," Tom said matter-of-factly.

"The one I selected, with the faucet, is only \$550. . ."

"\$550? Wow, Mom, what's it for?"

"Personal hygiene, Chuck. It's called a bidet. Your father will tell you what it's about."

"I don't have a clue about how it works, and I don't care!" Tom snapped. "You're always complaining about Furface drinking out of the toilet. What's he going to do with the bidet?"

I had to choke back my laughter -- not laughing at them, but the mental picture that flashed through my mind, when Tom and Patty were filling out the detailed survey.

