

Squirrel Duty

“I can’t imagine having brain cancer with anyone else,” blogger Adam Hayden tells his wife as another unexpected challenge crashes into their lives.

October 14, 2024 By [Adam Hayden](#)

A moth fluttered slowly between us—a casual sort of wobbly flutter. Like me, after a couple of driveway beers or anytime I leave my cane at home on a trip out of the house.

I tracked it with my eyes, the moth, more or less unconcerned by it. Whitney and I were staring at the hole in our roof—squirrel duty. The moth caught her attention, and when she turned her head, our eyes locked, and we cracked up. We laughed a cathartic A&W laugh like only we know how.

“I can’t imagine having brain cancer with anyone else” is an actual thing I said to my wife some months ago when attempting to be romantic. That’s as much us as anything.

“What do we do if a squirrel really does climb in?” Whit asked. “I glanced at the broom I used to sweep the shattered glass into piles. “I’ll chase it out with that,” I said with more confidence than the idea warranted.

We shot straight up in bed when the tree(s) hit our roof. We grabbed each other’s hands. “Are you okay?!” I said with a panicked breath. “The babies!” Whitney was already sprinting out of bed.

My first thought was that something had exploded behind the house. The electrical box? I knew where the sound was coming from and rushed that way. It was probably three barefoot steps when I realized I was stepping on broken glass—not as bad as that Home Alone scene.

“They’re still asleep,” Whitney said in a quiet tone. I guess white noise and a closed door make a good seal. She flipped on the living room light.

“Ho.ly shit.”

“Is that an actual tree limb sticking in our house?”

“Babe.”

“Babe.”

“Babe, I think I’m standing on broken glass.”

“Babe.”

Whitney snaps her head at me and flies into action. She snags the sweeper from the mount around the corner in the garage and begins vacuuming the kitchen, methodically making her way toward me.

We’ve been together 15 years, and you sort of get to know someone after that long. When you add some childhood happenings, a terminal illness, and three kids, you really get to know someone, and Whit and I have gained insight about each other. “I can’t imagine brain cancer with anyone else,” remember?

I know that my wife doesn’t do quickly-awakened-from-sleep super well. This is a time to exercise well-honed communication techniques.

“Honey,” I say in my softest tone.

“Honey.”

Whitney takes her eyes off the glass-covered floor and looks at me.

“I’m pretty sure I’m standing in broken glass, so maybe we start the vacuuming after I can move my feet?”

She processes the entire scene, and she laughs.

This was our first laugh of the night, within five minutes of two giant trees slamming into our house. Not bad. #AandWTumorTakedown

Whitney made the phone calls, and I swept the floor.

I have not, do not, and will not ever make the phone calls. If in a terrible accident, I’ll likely bleed out before I call 911. Can I text 911? What will they ask me? Do I remember my address? Should I have my Driver’s License? No way, right? Or maybe the driver’s license number has all the information they need, so it’s quicker than asking all the questions? Where’s my wallet? What’s their number?

A few years ago, I was in the car with Whitney, and she was making phone calls willy-nilly! On one phone call, she actively forgot why she was calling as the person picked up. My god! That is my personal hell.

“How did you do that?!” I asked in awe after she ended the call.

And so. Whitney made the calls, I swept the floor, and after a while, we took our seats.

You know, for squirrel duty.

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