

Okay. Does This One Need Stitches?

by

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Hi Kids,

We are at the half-way point on our trip to our summer place in PA, and as promised I am emailing you to let you know how the trip has been so far. So as not to alarm you, I thought I'd tell you this particular part of our trip in Q & A form. lol

QUESTION: So, what's the worst thing that can happen while riding down the interstate?

ANSWER: You look back and see two of your wheels following you down the highway.

QUESTION: So, what do you do about it?

ANSWER: You watch your husband calmly throw them in the back of the pickup and drive on. After all, the trailer still has two axles and one and a half sets of wheels.

QUESTION: What's the next scariest thing you can see twenty minutes later?

ANSWER: You look in the rearview mirror and see two box springs and a king-size mattress in the middle of two lanes of the highway. **And they're yours!**

QUESTION: What do you do about that?

ANSWER: You stand outside the truck and watch your frantic husband run the quarter mile back to retrieve them. Meanwhile you watch semis and cars suddenly weave in and out between them. So, you pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and (copy and paste) pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray and pray...And then, you watch as your only husband finally arrives at the spot and darts between the traffic to pull, then two very bruised box springs and king-sized mattress, (now probably reduced to queen-sized) and a very splintered headboard off the pavement and onto the railings. All the while, praying and praying and praying and praying and (copy and paste again) praying and praying and praying and praying.

QUESTION: What's the next scariest thing:

ANSWER: Watching in the side-view mirror as your frazzled husband backs up the pickup, and an eight-foot wide trailer, loaded eleven feet high with insulated steel panels, and one bed frame, one emergency tail light, and one and a half sets of wheels. All this on an eight foot, one inch wide emergency lane. All the while praying, etc.

We have made it to our friends' house in Asheville. So today, we are fixing and fixing and fixing and fixing and fixing. I'll email you when we get settled in PA.

Love,
Mom

Dear Kids,

We are almost settled in here at the summer place. Dad and I, (with a lot of effort) finally got the box springs and mattress up over the landing and into the bedroom. It's nice to have a real bed up here, even though it has duct tape on the corners, and the headboard is somewhere in North Carolina in a million splinters.

It is still taking a good bit of getting used to, having to climb an aluminum ladder to the upstairs, but I do have stairs on the list of things I would like Dad to get finished this summer. He's almost done with the garage, and hopefully will get to some of my projects soon. The garage was first on his list of priorities. My list of priorities is probably buried somewhere under it. (The garage, I mean.)

Today, we went to Erie, grocery shopping. Instead of taking the pickup, we took the little motor home because Dad wants to keep the battery up. When we got home he decided to add some oil, while I brought in the groceries. As I reached for the milk, I heard a commotion at the front of the van. I looked up and saw Dad running around the corner of the garage. Before I could grasp onto my second bag of groceries, he had returned with a bucket of water and was throwing it into the engine part of the van. I asked him what was going on up there. "Oh, just a little fire," he panted and disappeared once more around the corner. (One day he promises that he will finish installing the outside water spigots.) There was only a little smoke by then and just one or two flames that I could see from where I was standing at the side of the van. I had to make two trips to get all the groceries into the house. I could complain about not getting any help with the heavy bags, but I guess this time Dad had a good excuse. I'll tell you about Dad's scorched eye brows in another email.

Love
Mom

PS: Just in case my emails have been a little scary lately, I've attached a poem to brighten things up, so to speak. Lol

Sun Catchers

The clown in our window laughs at me.
He hangs there, snatching rays of sun
In his blue cheeks, spitting them back into my face.

His neighbor, the rainbow, brags that she has more colors
Even though she is smaller.
Even her cloud has silver within its core, she says.

They both boast of their own brilliance.
They say they are the delight of our kitchen,
That our window would be dull without them.

But I remind them that with one flick of my finger
I could snatch them from the pane
And toss them into the mildewed pit underneath our sink.
Even my Lemon Pledge would not be impressed with them then.
And the geraniums would still blaze red across our sill.
And be much more polite.

Kids,

I'm happy that you all enjoyed my little poem. Yes. I can start sending you more from my collection.

I was thinking of car troubles yesterday and wondered whether you remembered all those vacations we went on where we eventually ended up having to stop for repairs somewhere along the road. It seemed like every trip. Some of you used to kid us about it even after you grew up. (As well as continuously prompting me to update you while we are on the road.) One fixin' incident, I remember, was on our way back from one of our Dallas trade shows. You older kids were off on your own by then, and Nick was the only one with us. The front axle on the motor home broke, and luckily Dad got it stopped in the emergency lane safely. (They named that lane for Dad, you know, and he's made great use of it) To make a long story short, we spent three days, three inches from the traffic lane on a four-lane interstate highway while Dad ran around Shreveport searching for a used axle.

Living with Dad is akin to a form of osmosis. One tends to absorb certain practices, whether one wants to or not. I contracted this form of osmosis on the second morning when Dad had gone into town, and because he wanted the batteries to charge he left the motor running. By one o'clock, I figured we would either run out of diesel or the batteries would be so charged that they would pop. Trouble was, I couldn't find the cut-off for the motor. I knew it was on the floor somewhere around the pedals, but we had put in new carpeting, and after that Dad must have been able to find it just because he knew where it was. Here's where Dad's way of doing things proves out my osmosis theory. Like Dad would do if he needed help, (which would be a very unusual circumstance) I bravely (or foolishly) went outside to wave down the first pickup truck that came along. I figured that pickup men usually know about cut-off switches. That part was no problem. The problem was that when the guy got out of the truck, he looked like... Well, he was really a rough looking character. He had a bandana tied around his head, and a big old scar right down the side of his unshaven face.

I asked him if he knew anything about cut-off switches and explained the situation. I thought I would get lucky (I mean fortunate), and he would just tell me where it should be or if there was another way to shut off the motor. But no, he walked right on over to the open door, and inside to the driver's seat. All I could think of was defenseless little Nick in the back of the RV. To make a long story shorter, nothing happened, including not finding the switch. But, that's when I finally figured out that Dad and I are two completely different kinds of people. He's a "do what has to be done, even if it kills you" sort of person. I'm a "let Dad take care of it, even if it kills me" kind of person. At least, I am now.

Take care, and love
Mom

PS: Talk about taking chances. What do you think about this poem?

Jump Right In

Don't worry about the fishes
Or all the biting turtles.
Don't worry about those snakes that stretch for miles.
Go ahead and have your swim.
For you'll not find one of them.
Because they've all been swallowed by the crocodiles.

Dear Kids,

You remember the year that we lost a bunch of our retirement savings doing that day-trading stuff. Well Dad is getting wiser with age. Now that we've sold the "big ole homestead" and got another chance at saving for our retirement, it seems that we are now investing in real estate instead of playing the stock market. The alligator leather business hasn't been providing much for our golden years, so I guess real estate is a good thing. Right now, we just don't see much gold in those golden years.

I am very happy with the new house in Florida. Dad was busy all winter, laying marble in the master bath and applying the stain on the four-panel doors. I've always wanted to have a home finished before I moved into it. But, at least it is well past the drywall stage. With this house I sort of stuck around so that I could actually remind him to cut out the holes for the receptacles before he forgot where they were.

In the summerhouse, there is one whole wall that has absolutely no receptacles. (Well, they're there somewhere. I just can't see them.) But that's okay. We still don't have stair railings either. But I am thankful that, after spending three summers in the house here in PA, we finally have stairs. Climbing an aluminum ladder was sort of scary at my age. Especially in the middle of the night when the ladder slips along the floor because someone had kicked the two-by-four out of the way when he was bringing in the firewood. (Dad promises that one day he will get the heating system he installed working properly.) By the time we finish building the house up here, it will be time to remodel. But that's okay, too. It's a great investment for our retirement.

Because, we have now invested in the cabin in Newfoundland, and we won't be spending our whole summer in the Pennsylvania house. The cabin is 50 years old, but guess what. It was completely FINISHED when we moved into it. I am hoping, however, that Dad's plans for remodeling it will be put on the "back burner" for awhile. He already had too many "pans in the fire", and I'm afraid he's getting dangerous.

But, I am truly thankful that Dad is investing in real estate now. I do have one problem though. I was looking for my apple place mats the other day. But I couldn't remember which *drawer* I had put them in. Not only that, I couldn't remember which *house* I had put them in. And what was worse, I not only couldn't remember which *state* they were in, I couldn't remember which *country* they were in. Not to worry, though. Your inheritance is safe with me.

Love,
Mom

PS: And speaking of Inheritance, I've attached a poem with the very same title, along with this one.

Night Moth

Red-eyed tree frog,
you cling so tightly
to the narrow reed swaying
above this thin water.

Where do you stare so intently?
I can see nothing
in the mist before you.

It is dark and this spring night
casts its songs across
the bending grasses of the pond.

I catch the foreshadow
of the night moth,
the sudden lash of your tongue.

I cannot feel your satisfaction
Or know the suddenness
of death.

Hi Kids,

I've been thinking how our lives have changed since your dad and I got married. We sure didn't start out with much. Dad got out of the Navy two months after the wedding, and started looking for a job. He had a little money saved and we bought a 15-foot travel trailer to live in. But pretty soon, we knew we would need something bigger, since our first baby was on the way. So we upgraded to a 12 by 60 trailer. Several years later, we moved it to an acre of land with orange groves and woods all around us.

Now, you know how much Dad loves hunting. Well, (deep subject) one night he took up hunting inside the house. I probably never told you this story, but here is a poetic re-enactment, so to speak. I've also attached a picture of our wedding day.

Love,
Mom



**Dad and I, the day we got married in Newfoundland in 1966.
I tell everybody that when I found out that Dad lived in Florida, I married him. And since we still live in Florida, I'm still married to him.**

Okay, Just kidding.

Close Encounters Of The (Beep) Kind

Perhaps it was the light from the moon, flickering,
that caused the hyacinths to quiver
on my kitchen wallpaper
and baskets to loom like up-turned fairy caps.

I held my perch on the kitchen table
one hand on the switch,
the day's garbage, bait
for the midnight mover of jarred jams
that scurried into packed cabinets
and stirred the house with hurried clatter.

Your snores drifted from the far bedroom.
My heartbeat echoed across countertops.

It began with a sound so sudden, it wasn't there.
A rippled whisper, like the voice of a leaf
turning its back to face the wind.
Then, the definite rustle of plastic.

I don't know for certain how the light
came on or why I screamed.

You came tearing down the trailer hallway.
(You called it our mobile home.)
I began describing the creature.
"Civet Cat" you mumbled as it lunged
into a lower cabinet.
"White with black stripes" I continued.
"Or black with white stripes, could've been."

You appeared a second time
jamming ammo into your rifle.
Buckshot punctured potatoes.

An indescribable scent attached itself
to every part of the room.

I stopped describing. We had words.
I sold the trailer. Cheap.

Dear Kids,

How's it going, today? We didn't start out too well, but it could have been worse.

This morning, Dad had a meltdown. He brought it into the office to show me; a blob of aluminum (or maybe silver) shaped like a petrified bird. ("Petrified" in Newfoundland is sometimes translated as extremely terrified). He said he found it in the wood stove in the shop, apparently having put a cardboard box that he had thought was empty into the fire. He looked at me quite seriously, and asked if anyone had sent us a special buckle lately to fit to one of the alligator belts he was to custom make. He hoped that there had been no diamonds attached. lol

This sort of reminded me of when we first started spending summers on our Pennsylvania property. You might remember, we had a trailer back then, and it had a flimsy old wood stove that was not much more than a metal barrel with an opening at the top to shove the firewood through. Dad started a fire one cold, rainy day, and when it had burned down a little (the fire, not the trailer) he added a long, thick piece of firewood that didn't quite fit. Being that the wood was extremely dry it caught fire immediately, and before Dad realized that it was not going in any farther, flames were shooting about a foot above the log.

I stood back, as usual not saying much, but thinking books and books of things I could say, and decided to let him handle it. One of those words as colorful as the flames coming out of the stovetop, shot out of Dad's mouth, but even faster were Dad's feet, running out the back door. Before I could even wonder what he was thinking, he was back with the chainsaw. A chainsaw, might I remind you, is full of a very volatile liquid called gasoline. The wood he was about to saw, I might remind you, was engulfed in what some people might describe as a very dangerous situation.

Talk about being petrified. I grabbed Nick and bolted for the back door.

I really believe Dad has a guardian angel sitting on his shoulder. I wonder whether that angel realizes that he has saved Dad from more fiery situations here on earth, than he could ever encounter in that other place.

Love, and take care down there.
Those of you in Florida. Ha ha

Mom