

# Generations

## The mouse that didn't roar

By Peg DeMarco - Special to The News Herald – Sunday, 9/18/16



On the morning of our 17th wedding anniversary, I casually strolled into the bedroom and asked my husband if he wanted anything at the grocery store. Sure, his eyes were closed, but by 10 a.m. on a Saturday, it was time to plan our special day.

I was greeted by a growl and then an exasperated, “Can’t you see that I was sleeping?”

That was enough to spike my blood pressure, so I grabbed my keys and headed off to the store.

I spotted a bouquet of white and pink roses with baby’s breath, decided I had to have them as a gift to myself, and laid them carefully in the shopping cart. I knew we had enough dog food and toilet paper, so the rest of the groceries would have to wait because I was in no mood to pick out cuts of beef.

I stopped at the greeting card aisle, parked in front of the section marked “Anniversary,” and went through at least a dozen cards. The hearts, couples hand in hand at sunset, and flowery Hallmark verses just didn’t do it for me.

And then I spotted one that seemed more appropriate in the “Get Well” section. It was a picture of a great big sad looking boxer with the words “You’re feeling bad?” Inside, the card read simply, “That makes me so sad. Please get well soon.”

Perfect, I thought.

When I got home, I arranged the roses in a pretty vase, scribbled “happy anniversary” inside the card, put his name on the envelope, and stood it up in front of the vase next to a bag of cheese balls, which was my anniversary gift to him.

He got up a bit later and eventually noticed the roses after a rather chilly reception.

“What’s this?” he asked, holding up the card.

I didn’t answer him, but he was curious so I watched him out of the corner of my eye. He opened the card, read it, and then read it again.

“It goes with the cheese balls. Happy Anniversary,” I said dryly and suddenly we both burst out laughing.

Apologies followed and all was forgiven once again in the DeMarco household and that’s the way things work when you’re with your significant other in your latter years. You learn to cope, tune out a lot, and resort to humor because it truly is the best medicine.

Take the mouse story. My husband knows well and good my aversion to mice — not Mickey or Minnie, of course, but the little critters that sometimes decide they’d rather be living in your house than their own.

We’ve had our share of unwanted mice in the early years, but our remarkable exterminator has managed to keep them at bay and all the other unwelcome guests of the insect world.

However, about two months ago, my husband casually mentioned that he had seen a mouse run through the kitchen.

I immediately went into “mouse” mode and jumped on the sofa.

“That’s impossible! The bug man came last month.”

“Uh-huh,” he said unperturbed, “but we’ve got a mouse in the house. I’m going to the store and get those sticky traps again.”

I detest killing any kind of animal, so I leave mouse and bug duty to him, which in the chronicles of marriage law is included on the husband’s list of jobs right after taking out the garbage.

He returned with the sticky traps, applied a little enticing peanut butter, and set them down in difficult to reach places so that the dogs wouldn’t get to them.

And then we waited. And waited.

One evening, as I sat in the living room watching CNN for a couple of minutes before the start of an old Bogart movie, my husband suddenly stood up and pointed toward the kitchen.

“There! I just saw the mouse run across the kitchen floor!”

Too late — I had already jumped on the sofa and missed it.

Weeks went by and my husband had two more solo sightings, but the traps remained mouse-free.

Finally, last week, I went with him to Morganton Eye for a checkup. He had been complaining about “floaters” in his right eye. For those that don’t know what floaters are, they’re tiny clumps of gel or cells inside the clear gel-like fluid that fills the inside of an eyeball and very common as people age. They can appear as different shapes, such as little dots, circles, lines, clouds or cobwebs. Eventually, your brain gets used to them and you learn how to ignore them.

Driving home from the eye appointment, we went over everything the doctor told us about floaters, how annoying they can be at first, what to expect later on, and how it’s a natural part of aging. In fact, they often can appear as sudden movements that really aren’t there.

And by the time we pulled into the driveway, we had figured out that there had never been a mouse in the house at all, but rather a stubborn right-eye floater.

“Yeah,” my husband said through a chuckle, “but you can still jump pretty high, Peg, when you hear the word mouse.”

“Oh, go eat some cheese balls,” I countered in full anticipation of more to come during the next 17 years of our marriage.

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