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The Vivid Sting of a Life Lost

Fri, 2012-01-27 20:27 — [Robin Olson](#) [1]

NOTE: THERE IS NO GORE IN THIS POST, BUT THERE IS A SAD PHOTO OF THE LAST MOMENTS OF A WILD ANIMAL'S LIFE. VIEW WITH DISCRETION.

I'm like a cat. I like my little routine. I like the predictability of the day. When there are jostles and bumps, I can handle it, to a point, but this week, had I known how it was going to unveil itself, I might have skipped over to next week.

With my hand beginning to recover, though still very tender, and with new antibiotics no longer making me sick, I set to the task of focusing on helping Bobette with her recovery and to continue working with Jakey and Teddy, to help them overcome their tummy troubles, as well as keep them from going stir crazy in their small bathroom home. The days are long and there is little time for a proper meal or just plain old sitting around in front of the TV. I admit the need for a break. Last night I thought I had one.

As it often does, once I sit down, the cats act up. Maybe one starts being aggressive with another, or one is acting like he's going to pee on the floor because the litter pan isn't pristine. I'm constantly getting up, then sitting down, getting up, then down. I don't think I've ever just sat for even 15 minutes without something going on that I need to tend to and last night was no different.

I heard an odd sound. It wasn't very loud, nor did it last very long. I turned off the volume on the TV and listened. I knew something was wrong so once again, I got up.

Blitzen and the DOOD were in my office, frantically trying to get behind a file cabinet and a printer stand. There was something else in the room, but that sound was not the sound of a mouse. It was bigger. I started to tick off in my mind what it could be and the options were not very appealing. It could have been, God forbid, a rat? A squirrel? A raccoon? opossum? What the HELL was in my house?



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There's very little room in my office to walk around. It's a small room to begin with and I have it full of bookshelves and storage for a zillion years of graphic design project files and reference books. It's not a pig sty but it's not meant for more than me and a few cats to hang out in. Trying to get to a wild animal in this room was going to mean things getting broken and or possibly someone getting hurt.

Sam got the big flashlight out and was trying to see what was going on. I stood by the doorway with a [Maglite](#) [2], shining it under the furniture. While the cats were going crazy, I saw something move. It was BIG. This was no mouse or rat. I yelled to Sam as the thing made a move for it. Somehow it got across the room over to my bookshelves. Sam could have grabbed it, but was unable to, allowing the creature to get into the space between the wall and the bookcase. Sam directed his flashlight into the space. The creature was halfway up the back of the bookcase. It was a [flying squirrel](#) [3].

How the HELL were we going to get that thing out of the house in one piece? There was no moving furniture, that was for sure.

We couldn't open the window because it's a big window that opens left to right. The screen would be about four feet square, at least and even if we could get it out, there was no room to back up to get it out of the way...AND I live in the woods. You open the window to let something out, odds are you will get something back IN while you're at it.



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It was already pushing 10pm. What were our options? We didn't have a small humane trap. We couldn't just leave the door open and wait for the cats to scare it out at 3am. Sam went to look for something and I grabbed the maglite-which weighs a few pounds. I don't know why, but it slipped out of my hand onto my big toe. The pain was so severe that I almost passed out. I started SCREAMING and CRYING, desperately trying to leave my body it hurt so bad. I thought the cat bite was painful-this was nothing in comparison.

And Sam...just stood there while I writhed in agony on the floor. I was in so much pain I couldn't talk. My mind was abuzz. I was trying to think...what to do? How to stop this PAIN!! Why isn't Sam doing ANYTHING?! Do I have to tell him? What if I was having a heart attack? Would he stand there and look at me, too?

Now I was really pissed on top of being in agony. I shouted at him to get me some ice. The pain kept coming in violent waves that made me shiver. I tried to bend my toe. I could bend it a bit, but it was too much..too much..and now I'm thinking about the damn flying squirrel in my office. The cats were going to get it or some crazy shit was going to happen any second now. I had to stop hurting so I could get back to the problem at hand, but the pain was just getting worse.



@2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Waiting for tickets to a concert or just hoping to get into my office?

Sam got some ice, but was very awkward about the whole thing. I guess not everyone is good at being in charge when someone else is in pain. Me, I just get things done, take charge, help out. I don't wait to be told what to do if it's an emergency. Here I am rocking back and forth, trying to calm down, while he says barely a word. I really felt like I was on my own. Great. Just what I needed.

I asked him to turn on a light so I could see my foot. It didn't look as bad as I thought, but it was already swollen and discolored. I guess I will lose that toenail one of these days. I bent my toe, it was painful but I could bend it. The ice made it hurt worse, but I had to do it so I sat there for 20 minutes while the tears dried on my face, and iced the injury. Meanwhile, the cats were lurking around, hoping the flying squirrel would come down and play with them.

After the "incident" I was "done" for the night. I didn't care who ate what at that point. I was going to bed to nurse my wounds. I suggested to Sam to put a cat carrier in my office with some peanut butter on a plate inside it. To shut my office door so the cats could not get in it and we'd deal with it in the morning.

I slept for a few hours, then woke when Sam came to bed at after 1AM. I couldn't get back to sleep. My toe was throbbing painfully. I finally got up and took a fist full of aspirin. After a few hours I fell asleep again, only to wake up in pain when the alarm went off at 7:30.

But what of the flying squirrel?

He was not in the cat carrier and hadn't touched the food. Sam found him behind my printer stand where I keep my battery backup and surge protectors. A cat bed had slipped behind the printer stand, onto the floor. The little flying squirrel was sleeping on the bed. He moved a bit, but seemed to be sleeping. The cats were forming a line outside my office. They all wanted to "help" get the flying squirrel, but I was not going to let that happen.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Nicky about to get his fluids for the first time.

I called [Wildlife in Crisis](#) ^[4] and they told me that flying squirrels are easy to trap. To put out black oil sunflower seed and some walnuts. Oddly enough I had both of those things, so all I needed was a trap. We had to leave to bring Nicky to see Dr. Larry. Nicky has renal disease. I'm not sure how severe it is, but the fact that we have to learn how to give Sub Q fluids means he's lost a lot of kidney function. While we were out we were going to find a trap. I made some calls and thankfully, my buddy Carolee, who is the Animal Control Officer of Newtown, said I could borrow one of hers.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Hang in there little guy.

I got back home, dropped Nicky off, then got ready to head out to get the trap. I didn't go into my office for fear of spooking the flying squirrel out into the rest of the house. I stopped over at the Dog Pound and had a nice visit with Carolee and Matt. They had some small traps that were ancient. One had a newspaper lining the bottom. I joked it looked like it was from the 1800's.

I felt hopeful that we'd get the flying squirrel out by tonight. I figured I would set the trap, shut the door to my office with me

inside it so I could do some work, then later tonight the little guy would get trapped and I could let him go outside. Maybe he was still sleeping on the cat bed, the irony not being lost on me as I limped into my office after setting the trap. I put the trap down, then leaned over the printer stand, but the flying squirrel was gone! I started to look around the room in dread. Where did he go? Was he going to jump out at me or worse? Was he dead behind the bookcase?



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Fly free.

Just as I was about to leave, I saw him. He was right out in the middle of the room. He wasn't moving. I called out to Sam and Sam put on gloves and got a container. He got the flying squirrel but he captured it too easily. It was barely moving.

We watched it for awhile and ended up moving it into a cat carrier. I couldn't see it breathing, but Sam thought he saw it move. It's eyes were open, but in them I saw that all too familiar emptiness that told me we didn't have much time left. At first we thought we'd give him some time to rest, but then it seemed he had passed away. We brought him outside, as we do with all the creatures who die in the house and offered him to the other animals to help sustain them. We always put them on the lap of the Buddha statue in our yard, in the hopes it will somehow be a respectful place to let them rest. I don't know why I felt I needed to take a photo. I felt so terrible about the whole thing. As I pressed the button to take the photo, the little squirrel MOVED. I thought I was losing my mind, but Sam saw it, too. We picked him back up and I called WIC again. They told me to come over, so with throbbing toe and aching hand, I drove the dying flying squirrel to their Center, all along feeling I was doing a Fool's errand...but I owed it to the squirrel to try.

I was met by a Vet as I pulled up the driveway. I told him I thought it was too late. He held the little flying squirrel in his hands, examining him carefully and agreed that he had passed away. He told me that with cat bites, the little guys only have about 12 hours before the bacteria in their mouths causes so much damage that they can't turn it around after that. I never even saw a mark on the flying squirrel, but I knew that's must have been what happened. I thought about the bite on my hand and wondered if there was any way I could have helped the little guy sooner. I had the medicine in my house that would have saved him-but what dosage? How would I give it to him? I couldn't help but feel the bitter sting of being too late to save his life.

I'm definitely "done" for the day. I've written my post, now I'm going to go hide under the covers-hopefully alone. I'm going to ignore the fact that the DOOD did not come down to eat his dinner. I'm worried maybe he bit the squirrel and what did the squirrel give him in return? Is he sick again? At what point do I just tell everyone to fend for themselves and hope I can deal with it later.

And I didn't even tell you about the kitty whose back paws are gone...either crushed or cut off, who we're trying to put a rescue together for...but I will soon. I will. For now...

...Fly free little flying squirrel. Rest in Peace.

Comments

Sat, 2012-01-28 10:18 — Abby (not verified)

Thank you for your caring

I am a new reader of your blog, but I am very touched by the depth of your caring for your cats. Now it's obvious that it extends to other animals as well. So, thank you. The world needs more of you. I'm sending good wishes for you and for your family, critters included. Also, if your toe still hurts, please have it looked at. It may be dislocated. I did the exact same thing recently with the edge of my computer. I just thought it was bruised until it popped back into place a few days later! It felt so much better afterwards.

Sat, 2012-01-28 01:01 — Catnymouse (not verified)

You are filled with such love

You are filled with such love the earth is a better place to have you in it.

Fri, 2012-01-27 21:41 — acninee

Cats just do what nature or

Cats just do what nature or God or the Universe has designed them to do. Poor little squirrel. Next time you will approach this with more knowledge. You were good to try.

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