Of Mice and Men

Ok, so nothing actually about men here, I just didn’t have a catchier title. If you live in the foothills, you know that at some point you’re going to have a mouse or two in your house. If you don’t yet live here, but are considering it, know that at some point you’re going to have a mouse or two in your house. For most folks, not a big deal, and if you have a good cat in the house the problem gets taken care of fairly quickly. For others, if by others I mean me, it’s a very big deal indeed. And we’ve always had good cats, which ironically has elevated the issue.

Hi, I’m Sally and I’m mouse-a-phobic. Not just your basic Eek! No, my phobia is full on go for the highest ground and refuse to come down until the (literal) rat bastard is gone. While I’ve improved over the years – I no longer jump up on the fireplace mantle – I still don’t like the little suckers in sight one bit. And it really doesn’t matter if their dead or alive, the fear is the same. My friend Kim, who is just twisted enough to find this hysterically funny, recently reminded me of several of her favorite episodes and suggested I share a couple.

When Jim and I first moved up here from down in the city back in 1991, we bought a 1920’s log cabin in Indian Hills. We had an amazing cat named Toulie and, while Toulie was an excellent mouser, her major flaw was she liked to just play Catch and Release. She would play with them until they just died of freakin’ exhaustion and then leave them like a kid with a toy she no longer wanted. She also always made a very specific “I have a mouse” noise, which was my sign to go for the high ground (and germane to the story). One morning, Jim had already left for work and I was just getting out of the shower when Toulie appeared at the bathroom door with a mouse in her mouth and making the “I have a mouse” noise. What immediately went through my head is that there’s a cat with a mouse between me and all of my clothing. We also had a back door to the outside in the bathroom (it was a curious layout, for sure), and Toulie loved to go outside, so I figured if I opened the door she would zip right out there and take her rodent pal with her. I opened the door and she indeed did zip right out there, except she dropped the mouse and left it behind.

Now there’s a dead mouse between me and all of my clothing and, I know for a fact, if I just make a run and jump over it, it will come back to life, grow 100 times its size, and bite me you know where. So, I did what any crazy mouse fearing person would do – I pulled out every single towel we owned from the linen dresser in there and flung them on top of the body. I then did a running Rapunzel leap over the pile, added a laundry basket to the top for good measure and the illusion of extra weight, got dressed and bolted. (I did grab Toulie from outside and throw her back in.) I then called Jim, let him know there was a dead mouse outside of the bathroom door under an enormous pile of towels, and it needed to be gone before I would set foot back in the house that evening.

Fast forward to that night when I come home from work. I called Jim from the driveway to make sure the coast was clear, and he assured me it was. When I came in, I asked again if he had taken care of the mouse and he replied, “Yes. And you should go look under your pillow.” My first thought was that if there was a dead mouse under my pillow, no jury would convict me. But I went and looked, and there was the stupid tiny rubber Mickey Mouse that a friend had given me, thinking it was funny. Apparently, that’s what popped up, mittens waving, to greet Jim when he lifted off the last towel looking for the body and he thought I was playing a bad joke on him. “How on earth could you have thought that was a real mouse??” Well, first, keep in mind I don’t wear my glasses in the shower, so things might have been a little fuzzy. Secondly, Toulie made the “I HAVE A MOUSE” noise! So, SHE was convinced enough that it was real. I stand by my decision.

There’s absolutely no moral to the story here. Except maybe make sure your cat can tell the difference between a rubber toy and the real deal. And the other story Kim referenced? It also involved a squeaky toy in my car that sounded EXACTLY like a live mouse. In my car. While I was driving. But that’s a story for another day.