

A Silver Lining

It's 10:30pm and I'm in bed proud of myself for actually getting settled before 11pm. As she walks into the bathroom, I remember an email she sent earlier that day; "the toilet is leaking again, I put a towel under it".

The last time the toilet leaked it caused quite a bit of damage. We would hear an intermittent dripping, but never saw any water. One day I walked into the bathroom and the carpet in front of the bathroom entry was wet. So was the carpet in the closet behind the bathroom. Houston I think we have a problem....Turned out the rubber toilet base seal had disintegrated and the water had leaked under the floor in the bathroom & subsequently under the carpet into the bedroom & closet. Fortunately the base floor is concrete and the subfloors were old and due for replacement. That was several years ago & didn't think that could be the problem again, at least I hope not. The carpet and floors are fairly new, & I'd hate to replace those again.

Remembering the email, I pop out of bed and take a look. Under the toilet by the water valve is a soaking wet towel. I can see the water dripping down the line that connects the tank to the water supply. That usually happens after I install the new tank hardware and just needs to be tightened down a little more. I hadn't replaced the tank hardware in a few years, but still saw this as a 2 minute repair.

As I turned the connector that connects the water line to the tank, I went the wrong direction. The drip became a small flow. No problem, I obviously just loosened it. I'll just tighten it and I'll be done. I gently tightened the connector and immediately I'm blinded by a firehose style spray of water. I can't see anything and I'm getting totally soaked!

My first thought is all the sitcoms where the know it all husband ignores his wife's advice to hire a professional. He ignores his wife's advice, and promptly faces a gusher of water from something he did wrong. All the while, the wife stands there, hands on the hips, just looking as if to say "I told you so".

Somehow I grabbed hold of the water line and it was then I realized, it was the water line spraying me, not the tank water. This is a problem; the tank has a limited amount of water & will empty in a short time. The city water supply is unlimited, this could spray for days, especially at the full force it was putting out. If I don't stop this soon, I'm going to have a flooded bathroom & bedroom.

Get a bucket!! I yelled. I wasn't sure that would help, but maybe if I could get the water out of my face and off the floor, I could figure this out easier.

I stuffed the hose back into the bottom of the tank, which didn't stop Old Faithful, but did allow me to see briefly. I tried to turn the water off, but I'm right handed and guess what was in my right hand? The hose. There is a about a foot of space between the toilet and shower wall, so I'm on my knees, leaning in as far as I can unsuccessfully attempting to turn off the water with my left hand.

I can feel the water inching up my bare feet and am amazed at how quickly the water is rising. I have to switch hands on the hose, so I another blinding shower ensues as I make the switch. Thank god this is

clean water!! I attempt to loosen the shut off valve with my more powerful right hand. Nope, that shut off knob refuses to budge. I can hear it laughing at me; “you need to work out more”.

I need my pipe wrench I say to myself. Only one problem, it’s in the shed. Our shed is a wooden structure that doubles as a wildlife hotel for whatever happens to wander in. You might see rats one day, a snake the next, crabs, turtles, etc. Because of the unknown guest list, she won’t set foot in it during the day. Now it’s late evening, pitch black, and I need her to go to where “I think the wrench is”. I don’t see that going to well.

Meanwhile the water is still rising, so I take another stab at shutting off the water. It moved, but I turned it the wrong way. Perfect!! If it moves one way, it’ll move the other. With each turn, the fountain slows and finally I have the water off. I look like I just climbed out of a swimming pool, soaking wet from head to toe. The surrounding walls are wet, the counter & mirrors are wet & the entire floor is covered in water. The water is barely a ¼ inch deep, but while trying to turn off the water, I’d swear it was 2 feet deep.

I drag out the wet dry vac and begin removing the water from all over. As the floor dries, it’s looking really shiny & clean. “We needed to clean the floor anyway” I joke. I flush the toilet to remove the remaining water and then vacuum out the tank. I’m making sure I don’t see water on this floor again anytime soon.

She walks around, appearing a little shocked. I think she is still taking in the fact that her bathroom was flooded in such a sudden, explosive manner. I’m also thinking she’s a little confused at how I handled it. I don’t normally handle life’s little slip ups in a composed manner. Earlier this evening, I spilled vitamins all over the kitchen floor and said a string of adult level adjectives. Yet in the midst of this late night surprise, I stayed calm and even joked about it afterward. I guess because this was all new territory for me, I didn’t have a pre-recorded response to the situation.

As I’m lay in bed, it’s well past 11, the dreams of an early night are long gone. The floor is dry, the water is off, & I’m mostly dry. I say aloud, “good thing that didn’t happen while we were at work”. Then I realize, we just returned from a week-long vacation. I instantly remember a sight I saw years ago & will never forget. A neighbor’s hot water heat broke while they were on vacation. When they returned & opened their front door, water flowed out like a river. Everything on the floor & a few inches up the wall was ruined.

For the first time in awhile, I went to sleep with a prayer of thanks. Thank you for being here when it happened. Thank you for the water being clean. Thank you for having the tools to clean it up and the know how to fix it.

My mind took a trip into what if land and I clearly saw what could’ve been; the flood starting in the bathroom, then soaking the entire upstairs carpet. Once the upstairs carpet was soaked, the water flowed down the stairs and onto the laminate floor. I said another few words of thanks....

The next time something unexpected happens & you have a chance to breathe. Take a step back and think. Quite possibly now is the best time for this to happen. Now is when you're ready to handle it, now is when the least amount of damage will occur, now is when you'll learn the most. Or maybe you just needed something to write about.....

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