

Greetings from the House O' Scorpions

Guess what was on the wall by my bed last night?! That's right. A scorpion. In my bedroom. Right by my bed. (Have I mentioned my preference for a very large scorpion-free zone surrounding the place where I sleep?) Had I turned out the lights only a few moments earlier, I would not have seen it scurrying up the wall, where it would have undoubtedly gone to the ceiling and then promptly fallen off right over my face.

Joe said we should ask around to see if our neighbors are having scorpion issues as well. What, pray tell, could possibly be gained from this? What if they say *no*? When my next door neighbor says, "Nope, never seen a scorpion

in my house!” is when things start feeling all *Amityville Horror* around here.

Joe took care of the scorpion with a hard-soled shoe, then — in true man fashion — promptly went to sleep. I, however, was not able to drift off. In fact, now that I know that my bedroom is a midnight playground for poisonous arachnids, my current plan is to sleep only in my car during daylight hours.

As I was lying in bed, in between fits of frantically brushing myself off every time the sheet or my pajamas touched my skin, I spent some time calculating the odds that one would actually see a scorpion if it were in the house. My house is 1,900 square feet, which would be over 22,000 square inches. The scorpions we see here are about four inches long. According to my calculations,

the odds of being in the right place at the right time to see one of these things is about one in a decazillion (a number I just made up for when your statistics need dramatic flair). And since I've seen two scorpions in my house in the past three days, I can only conclude that this must mean that our home is teeming with them.

I see even the most common household objects differently now that I know that I'm living in a scorpion Club Med. Some examples:

YOUR HOUSE	MY HOUSE
 <p data-bbox="321 428 406 457">Shoes</p>	 <p data-bbox="548 428 828 457">Possible Scorpion Nest</p>
YOUR HOUSE	MY HOUSE
 <p data-bbox="321 764 406 793">Towels</p>	 <p data-bbox="548 764 828 793">Possible Scorpion Nest</p>
YOUR HOUSE	MY HOUSE
 <p data-bbox="321 1100 406 1129">Broom</p>	 <p data-bbox="560 1100 820 1129">Known Scorpion Nest</p>

Around two o'clock in the morning I came up with a conspiracy theory that these things have been planted by a local pest control company — because, let me tell you, I am not a price-sensitive customer right now. As soon as I finish writing this I am going to call the first exterminator

whose contact info I can find and tell him to just get in his truck and start driving and I'll give him all the details while he's on the road.

Another theory is that this is God's plan to change the way I feel about roaches. They seem like the most darling creatures right now, perhaps even something one might want as a household pet. When we first moved in, I hoped we wouldn't have a roach problem like many people around here do. Now the possibility of seeing a roach crawling across my wall seems almost charming. They don't have stingers. They don't have pincers. Next time my son asks to get a dog, I'll see if he might be interested in a sweet little pet roach instead.

On Heat and Slip'N Slides

A group of neighbor girls have been hanging out at my house this summer, and today they and my kids wanted to play with the Slip'N Slide. I tried to talk them out of it, but when I found that my argument essentially boiled down to “I would rather sit motionless on the couch in the cocoon of my darkened house,” I decided to go with it.

I do not have fond memories of the Slip'N Slide. As a child, I recall feeling rather certain that whoever invented this device lived in a land far, far from mine. The theory is that you lay down a long yellow tarp, get it wet, and when kids run and jump on it they'll glide along in a splashtastic spray of water. In places like Oregon, Washington, and perhaps Connecticut and Virginia, I'm sure this works out very well. I can just picture throwing yourself down onto

the tarp only to be cushioned by lush, springy grass upon which you glide as if on a cloud.

Here in Texas, that's not how it works.

When we threw ourselves on Slip'N Slides, we were met with a bone-crushingly hard ground that was sparsely covered by grass that had the consistency of old hay. As we slid down the yellow tarp for our three seconds of fun, we'd experience the familiar explosions of pain when previously undiscovered rocks or sticks jabbed into our internal organs. Then we'd slide off the end into fire ants.

The girls, however, did not seem to share my perception of this activity as abject misery, and they set up the Slip'N Slide in my front yard with unbridled enthusiasm. I tried to join in this all-American activity of doing things outdoors in the heat and enjoying it, but I've

been out of practice for a decade or two. I stood stiffly near the yellow tarp and occasionally forced a supportive comment about the sliding skills of the young ladies. Within two minutes my skin broke out in blotchy red spots, and I thought I had the beginning symptoms of heat stroke, so I shuffled over to a tree for shade. I made a mental note to buy a book that offers a detailed analysis of how one can go about carefree summertime frolicking. Compared to the laughing, running kids, a passerby might have mistaken me for a statue of a sullen albino.

“Miss Jennifer! Miss Jennifer! Do you want to slide with us? It’s so much fun!” the kids called to me.

“At what point, pray tell, will the fun begin?” I wanted to ask. “When I hoist myself awkwardly onto the tarp, when

END OF PREVIEW

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