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Out-n-Up

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Out-n-Up

Throwing your back out is a miserable experience. And if you do it once, it is very easy to have it go out again. The first time you might be lifting a hide-a-bed sofa on a narrow staircase. The next time, you stoop to pick up socks on the floor. The results are the same. Bent over. Frozen. Miserable.

Another miserable experience? Raw sewage backing up through your drain and coating your laundry room floor. We had that happen every so often over the course of a couple of years. Disgusting. We got plastic tubs to keep the dirty clothes off the floor in case of an eruption. Eventually we got the problem fixed, an expensive endeavor. Very expensive. But before we did, weeks even months might pass between disasters and we'd forget about it, as though if we never thought about it, it would never happen again. Hopeful amnesia. Naïve at best.

There was this tell-tale warning of an impending explosion. The water in the toilet and the shower drain in the bathroom just off the laundry room would suddenly gurgle away, like the tide being sucked out to sea just before the tsunami hits shore. Hearing that sound would often buy us enough time to ensure any rugs or stray articles of clothing were clear before the brown ooze would pulsate from the tiny grid in the floor.

One morning, as I was lathering up in the shower, I heard the tell-tale gurgle. I stuck my head out in time to see the water unnaturally recede down the basin of the toilet. I shut off the shower and made a mad dash for the laundry room. As I suspected, a couple of sweaters and pants had come down

from the laundry chute, but missed the plastic bins. I bent quickly, scooped the clothes to safety and...that's when my back went out. As simple as that. Bent over. Frozen. Miserable.

And remember, I was just in the shower. I had made the mad dash without so much as a towel. "Honey..." I cried out, hoping my wife would hear me and respond post haste. My two teen-aged daughters were also upstairs, getting ready for school. They did NOT need to see this. Ever. I called out to her again, using her name this time, as I wanted to ensure to all exactly for whom I was calling.

I tried to steady myself from falling over completely by holding on to one of the plastic laundry tubs. The act of raising my arm shot a bolt from my spine down my leg, seizing my muscles in a painful spasm like a giant rat-trap snapping on my lower back.

My wife arrived on the scene and found me hunched over in the laundry room, naked and dripping wet.

"Wh-what...?" she started.

"A towel!" I said, cutting her off. "Quickly! A towel!"

She ran to the bathroom and returned with the towel. I had not moved an inch.

"What...?" she tried again.

I delicately wrapped the towel about my waist and slowly pivoted, still full dripping hunch, to sort of face her. "My back went out," I said. I could see from her reaction that that only explained a fraction of the questions going through her mind.

That's when the floor drain erupted raw sewage.

Jeff Laird