

Stepping
on the
Blender

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Other Times Life Gets Messy

Katherine Snow Smith

Stepping on the Blender & Other Times Life Gets Messy
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— Foreword —

The car was almost packed, and I was only 20 minutes behind my target departure time for the drive from Florida to North Carolina. My house was spotless and ready for renters for four months while I was away. I glanced around my kitchen one last time and decided to put the frosted glasses with merry-go-round animals in the cabinet above the refrigerator.

The tall, slim glasses with the blue-and-white tiger, yellow giraffe, orange elephant and other cheerful mammals were a wedding present to my parents in 1958. When I was growing up, they were only used for milkshakes made in the blender for my sister and me. I had reserved them for the same purpose with my three children. Now the vintage glasses sat on a shelf over the sink reminding me of three generations of my family. I didn't want to risk the renters breaking one.

I climbed onto a kitchen chair to move each glass to safer ground. When I leaned down for the last one, my elbow hit my Ninja blender, knocking it from the counter to the floor. I gasped, but the plastic pitcher bounced without breaking, and the blade rattled onto the tile.

“That was a close one. I am so lucky,” I said aloud. I secured my glass menagerie into the cabinet and was ready to hit the road.

I stepped down without looking, and my left foot landed on the blender blade, which dug a good two inches into my bare heel. I fell to the floor and screamed as I pulled the blade out of my foot. A geyser of blood erupted.

“No. No. No. Noooooooo. Please. No,” I wailed and started crying. “Not now. I was so close. Damn it.”

My phone and towels were across the house in my bedroom, so I crawled from the kitchen, through the living room and grabbed one of the fresh teal towels I’d just hung up for the renters. It turned scarlet in the minute it took to call my friend Deann, my usual medical advisor since she was an obstetrics nurse more than 25 years ago.

No answer.

I called another friend, Burchie, who has no medical training but lived nearby.

“Burchie! I stepped on the blender and there’s blood everywhere and I’ve got to drive to North Carolina,” I sobbed. “I give up. I give up. I can’t do this anymore.”

“Holy moly, Katherine. I’m getting in my car right now. I’m on my way to your house,” she said. “Should you call 9-1-1?”

“I’m not dying. It just won’t stop bleeding.”

“I’ll take you to the emergency room. They can stitch it right up.”

“I don’t have time for the emergency room. I have a book signing in St. Marys, Georgia, tonight. I need to leave in 20 minutes to make it there in time.”

“You need to cancel that. I’m walking in your door right now,” she said as I heard it open.

“Katherine! Look at all this blood.” Burchie followed the scarlet trail to my bedroom. “We are going to the hospital right now.”

“I can’t. Even if I don’t do the book signing, I have to be in Chapel Hill the day after tomorrow to start teaching. If I don’t leave today, I won’t make it there in time.”

Just then, Deann returned my call, and I explained the situation to her while Burchie took over holding another towel to my foot. Deann called back on FaceTime to survey the damage.

“Burchie, can you hold the phone right over the cut?” our medical adviser asked.

“I keep wiping off the blood to see the cut, but it just comes back,” Burchie said.

“Okay. Just keep putting pressure on it,” Deann advised.

At this point I was lying on my back on my bedroom floor with my foot propped up against a chair while Burchie held the third or fourth towel against it.

“So is there blood everywhere?” Deann asked.

“Did you see *The Staircase*?” Burchie asked. “It’s kind of like that.”

Finally, the bleeding stopped for a whole five minutes, and Deann got a good look at the gash in my heel. It was a straight slit with no jagged edges or tissue and tendons oozing out. Though I couldn’t put any weight on my foot, I could move it in all directions.

“I think you may be okay without stitches,” Deann said. “Try to get some of those liquid stitches they sell at CVS or Walgreens. And it’s good it’s your left foot. Maybe you can keep it elevated while you drive.”

Burchie loaded the last suitcases and my printer in the car.

“You’re going to be okay, Katherine. You’re going to be more than okay,” she said, hugging me goodbye. “But please know I’m never having another margarita or smoothie at your house.”

I drove up Interstate 95 with my left foot wrapped in a blue bandage, propped up on the dashboard between the steering wheel and window, and headed into the next phase of my life.

Molly, another St. Petersburg friend, called me in the car. She’d heard the news from Deann. She admonished me for not having stopped yet to get the liquid stitches and I whined that I didn’t have time. A few minutes later she called back to give me the address of a Walgreens in St. Marys. She had already confirmed they sold liquid stitches.

“It will take you five minutes to stop there. And please tell me you are wearing a shoe or a sock to keep it from getting infected,” she said because she knew me well enough to know that of course I was barefooted.

I made it to the St. Marys Walgreens and then to my little inn on the river with just enough time to ooze the “stitches” onto my foot, cover it in a white sock and put on tennis shoes with my linen shift. I hobbled into the book signing at a local gift and furniture store called Cottle & Gunn. I read an essay from my first book about the time I fell off my high heels while getting my photo taken with President Barack Obama at a White House media party.

“Are you still limping from that?” an observant woman in the audience asked.

“Oh no. This is from stepping on the blender this morning,” I replied, then laughed at myself. If I wasn’t falling on a president, I was stepping on a blender.

As I continued up I-95 the next day, I really tried to

figure out why these mishaps happen to me way too frequently. Am I accident prone or just unlucky? Careless or simply an idiot? Things do seem to go wrong. A lot. And not just injuries. I thought of the time the Uber taking me to the airport broke down on the Howard Frankland Bridge between St. Petersburg and Tampa. I had to get to Raleigh that day because of something or other with my parents, so I got out and walked along the edge of the bridge for a couple miles or so, pulling my carry-on behind me. My friend Biz happened to call and made me take a selfie, which showed my suitcase, four lanes of traffic behind me, and Tampa Bay's white caps lapping at the side of the bridge.

Two women who thought I had chosen to get out of a car because I was trying to get away from someone stopped and offered me a ride. I made it to my gate with 45 minutes to spare.

"Katherine, these things only happen to you," people said when I recounted the incident.

But it's not just me.

We all step on the blender at various points in life. Things go awry for everyone. From flat tires to cancerous tumors, broken Ubers to broken marriages, losing a wallet to losing a child, sister, spouse, friend, or parent. Some wounds are fine with a few liquid stitches, and some never heal.

I guess people like me, who cram too many things into a day or change course at the last minute are more ripe for mishap. I don't always calculate the risks, and when I do, I don't always pay heed to them. This increases my margin of error. I do bring some of this on myself. But a lot of the tough times in life just happen randomly with no chance

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of preventing them. Plenty of times in my life, I've passed right on by the Ninja blades and been very fortunate.

We all step on the blender and keep moving through life with various-sized scars. Some scars trace pain and resilience or risk and triumph while others become laugh lines. They shape us, prepare us for subsequent wounds and make us better at holding the towel for someone else's bleeding foot.



