

## My Darling Pack Rat . . . so it goes

by Jason\_Love

A pack rat is any of various rodents that collect in their nests a diversity of objects. Pack rats have soft brown fur and resemble squirrels with large ears. They have been found as far south as Nicaragua but, more problematically, living as wife in my home!

Let's investigate, shall we.

My wife Yahaira just purchased her fifth computer. We still have the first four, stacked in an otherwise useful closet. Yahaira goes through so many computers because she has never, ever deleted a file. She came close one day last April but chickened out when Windows asked if she was sure.

When Yahaira opens her e-mail, the processor begins to smoke on account of the 600,000 messages in her inbox. One time I set the program to archive e-mails that are 6 months old. She didn't talk to me for a week.

Yahaira has kept every ticket stub, postcard, receipt, packing slip, and baggage claim sticker since the first grade. And notes the woman could restore the forests of Oregon. She keeps them in her just-in-case files. I'm not sure what case that would be.

My wife does not abandon relationships either. Her ex-husband calls once a month and always inquires about me. "How's that poor guy doing anyway?" Yahaira keeps addresses of people she can't remember save through hypnosis. Last month, her third-grade teacher came over for board games!

Whereas I always thought that true friends were the ones who survived transitions between phone books, Yahaira taught me that we can always buy bigger phone books.

She doesn't even part with empty containers. Last week I was devastated to find an empty box of Corn Flakes and could only be consoled by the fact that if I had poured the cereal, the milk would have been empty anyway. So it goes.

The garage, however, is where the real cramming takes place. Lift up the tarps and you will see hair supplies from high school, sporting goods that no one can recognize, gifts that my wife has been meaning to send for several Christmases. There are piggy banks, 8-track tapes, clocks with hands, Barbie dolls without hands.

Then there are the clothes awaiting sentence. Yahaira doesn't wear them, but she also can't give them away. I believe they caused a short circuit in her brain. If you inquire about the clothing, she says, "They're not hurting anyone out there, are they?"

From personal experience, I find it best to move on at that point.

Then we have the broken appliances: vacuums that don't suck, fans that don't blow, lamps, hairdryers, space heaters, cram, cram, cram. Next is the friends and relatives section, where Yahaira stores things for others. There is Blake's luggage, which itself is storing toiletries. There is Dania's third-string bed set. Wait—There's Uncle Tony! He's not missing after all.

You can hardly blame a guy for wanting to purge. I mean, how many incomplete decks of cards can a family need?

I picked at the nest, careful to maintain its infrastructure. My strategy was to discard only items that could be replaced in case of emergency. That toaster, for instance. If Yahaira inquired about it, I could buy a new one, drag it home through the gutter, and none would be the wiser.

Before long I acquired a handsome heap of rubbish and only needed a container to carry it (surely I wouldn't use our own trash bin). I spotted a grimy, blanket-like item that must have been used to wipe dipsticks. You couldn't even read the logo: minican something or other. Must have been mechanic jargon.

I delivered my package and returned from the dumpster lighter, fresher, cleaner. I had taken one giant step toward unmucking my home.

It would be a week before Fate finished the chapter! Yahaira returned from work with that baby glow:

“I’ve been thinking of all the things I want to give our baby. I picked out the cutest little crib. I want to fill it with toys and hang Mom’s afghan over the side.”

“Afghan?”

“Yeah, it’s in the garage. Have you seen it?”

Oh, God, no.

“It’s a big and says Dominican Republic on it.”

Minican. The one thing I can’t replace.

I won’t share what happened next because it involves a lot of words you don’t find in the Bible. Let’s just say that I promised on my privates that I will never, never ever, if I remember correctly, remove anything from the garage ever again. Ever. I also surrendered my car space and now park on the street.

Yahaira has since redoubled her pack rat behavior to compensate for the loss. The only difference is that I don't have any smart aleck comments. Between you and me, though, I think the clouds are going to open up someday and we are going to witness a whirling mass of wreckage disappear into the sky.

It will be Yahaira taking it with her.

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