

## SENIOR MOMENTS

# The truth be toad, and a family mystery is revealed

It's funny what can happen when you stay up all night laughing and talking with a sibling you haven't seen in a long time. I was so pleased when my brother came to town for George's one-year memorial tribute. So pleased that I was actually considering adding him to my list of happy things that happened during this sad year.

I have always loved my baby brother, which is especially nice since I was hoping for a sister when he was born. I got over it and went on to become a mothering big sister.

When his first tooth came in. I was so excited I ran into the kitchen and poured milk into wine glasses so we could toast the sweet-faced little boy with the toothy smile. Yet, this cute little guy, now of age to collect Social Security, made a shocking confession to me on this trip.

"I was the one who put the toads in your bench," he said with a devious smile.

The previous owners of the house we lived in had converted the attic into a bedroom study suite for their son. It had wood-paneled walls, built-in bookcases and an alcove that housed a built-in desk with benches on either side. The seats lifted up for storage.



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One afternoon, I went to my desk to do my homework. When I opened the bench to get my books, I let out a shriek. Disgusting, slimy-looking little creatures were crawling all over my books. It never occurred to me that the toads were put there deliberately, and certainly not by my sweet baby brother, who was about 8 at the time.

"You put the toads in my bench?" I shouted at my brother over a late-night milk and cookies snack at my kitchen table.

"Damn right. You deserved it for being so prissy and trying to tell me what to do."

"Well, excuse me for trying to protect you from getting some weird disease from the yucky things you dragged in from the backyard. And here I thought you were a sweet kid who loved your big sister."

"I did love you, but you were bossy."

"Do you know how scared I was going to bed that night wondering if creatures lived elsewhere in the room and would attack me in the night?"

"That was the point," Peter laughed.

As I shoved the plate of chocolate chip cookies out of his reach, he said, "I still love you and you're still bossy."

Let's just say he has a very precarious place on my list of happy things.

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