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Skeptical reporter meets magical mouse

They say seeing is believing and as a life-long skeptic, I wholeheartedly agree. Sure, there are some things you accept by faith but for the most part, I'm a doubting Thomas. I need to lay eyes on it before I will believe it.

I guess part of my skepticism comes from my background as a journalist. I have people stroll into my office all the time and swear they know something for a fact when they are actually repeating rumor. They'll look you in the eye and say they know something for 100 percent sure. However, once pushed for details, you find that they heard it from a second cousin who heard it from a friend who heard it at the beauty shop from the aunt of their hairstylist.

That's why when my mom began talking about a mouse in her house, I treated it with a grain of salt. I mean, I put out mouse bait since there was obviously a chance mice had moved in. However, when mom kept talking about this one specific mouse that seemed to be messing with her, I started kind of worrying. Mom is 85 and has a sharp mind. She still works full-time at the teach-

er center, walking up the ramp with her walker every morning. But, her insistence of a mouse messing with her was getting me worried since no one else had seen this supposed mouse. This went on for weeks and was the topic of many conversations.

"You've seen it, haven't you Henry," mom maintained, asking my 12-year-old son for verification.

"Well ..." he resisted, his hesitancy telling me he hadn't actually seen the mouse.

"I KNOW what I saw," mom narrowed her eyes, seeing that I was less than convinced.

Being a wisecracker, I couldn't resist. "Does this mouse ... talk to you?" I grinned.

Mom just growled at my scoffing. "You'll see," she vowed. "It's here and it's real."

"Maybe it's an invisible mouse only you can see," I pressed.

"I am NOT losing my mind," mom insisted as she went to her refrigerator and pulled

out a bottle of vitamins. She unscrewed the top and pulled out one of them, displaying it like O.J. displayed the glove that did not fit.

"What do you think this is then, smart guy?" she pushed the half-eaten gummy under my nose.

"Um, a half-eaten vitamin?" I asked.

"The mouse has been chewing on it," she scowled. "I saved it as proof."

I shook my head. "So you're telling me that the mouse got into your fridge, unscrewed the bottle and ate part of a vitamin?"

"No, silly," she put the top back on the bottle. "I just now put the bottle in the fridge."

"Oh, that makes more sense," I countered. "You're just saying the mouse knows how to open a bottle and likes vitamins. Maybe it's Mighty Mouse."

Mom growled again, my sense of humor not appreciated.

"Hey dad," Henry called out from behind

me.

"Not now son," I replied. "I want to hear more about this magical mouse."

"But dad, you may want to see this," Henry called back

"What?" I said, walking over to the cabinet where Henry was standing.

"It's the mouse," Henry pointed to the little furry creature. He was right. Mom wasn't seeing things after all.

"HA!" Mom crowed. "Now do you believe me?"

Seeing is believing. "You're right," I agreed as I made a quick lunge at the critter that escaped my grasp and made a bee-line for freedom. "But there's no way it opened your vitamin bottle."

"Or did it?" Mom cocked her head. "Until just now the mouse didn't exist."

Anyway, as I'm writing this column the mouse is still in the house. I plan to capture rather than squish it. Hey, mom was right about the mouse existing. Maybe she's right about it opening the bottle.

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Fall is coming

Summer is almost gone, the days are getting shorter and the nights are getting longer. The weather is getting cooler, and we know that Fall is coming. We often celebrate the changing of seasons, but there was a tragic event that occurred at the beginning of time for which there is no reason to celebrate. That event took place in a perfect paradise called the Garden of Eden, when the first man and woman rebelled against God.

This notorious event called "The Fall" has negatively affected the world ever since. The first man and woman, named Adam and Eve, were created in the image of God and after His likeness. God put them in the garden to take care of it and enjoy the fruits of the trees located there, but there was one fruit that was off limits to them. God told them not to eat of it nor to touch it, lest they die.

Unfortunately, they were not alone in the garden, because one day the devil showed up in the form of a serpent to deceive them about the fruit that was forbidden. He convinced them that the fruit looked good, that it would make them wise as God, and it would give them knowledge of good and evil. He also argued that if they ate the fruit they would not actually die, and so the seed of rebellion was sown in their hearts.

When they ate of the fruit,

they did not stop breathing, nor did they drop dead on the spot, so it seemed that the devil was telling the truth. But something did die that day, and that something was their souls, which first became alive when God breathed into the nostrils of Adam and he became a living soul. That day their souls suffered spiritual death as they committed the first sin committed in the world

In the beginning, Adam and Eve enjoyed walking and talking with God each evening, as He came into the garden to be with them. After their sin of disobedience, they tried to hide themselves from God when He came to visit them. When they told God they were naked and afraid, God immediately knew what they had done, so He made them coats of animal skins to cover them.

God also had a long-range plan whereby His Son Jesus would come to earth and die on a cross to pay the penalty for the sins of the world and to grant forgiveness for those sins. If we will confess our sins to God and ask His forgiveness, God will restore life to our souls and we can become a whole new person.

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Scariest Halloween

Halloween is six weeks away, and I am very scared. Not of trick-or-treaters coming to my door, or of my car being soaped (even though it needs it).

No, I'm scared that I'll have to go shopping for something between now and Oct. 31. Because I know that there is no way I can go to any store between now and then without passing pyramids of gaudy "holiday-sized" packs of Halloween candy, costumes, napkins, tablecloths and giant outdoor decorations. What happened to all the costumes and decorations people bought last year? Where did they go?

Yes, it's convenient to be able to load up my cart with a couple of 3-pound bags of orange-colored candy and pick up a blood-sugar monitor from the same aisle, but is it really good for us? Maybe that explains why so many grocery stores have pharmacies in them now. What if it's in the store's best interest to make you sick? It'll sell you the disease and the cure on the same trip.

Most of us don't have a problem overeating during the holidays. The problem is that EVERY day has become a holiday. Almost every weekend is an excuse to have a little extra -- a tailgate party, a birthday, a wedding, a graduation, a new job, a vacation -- have another drink, have a piece of cake, a little chocolate chip cookie won't kill you. Until it does.

To get away from all the holiday sweets, I gave children hard-boiled eggs last year at Halloween. It was a big success! First, the kids got a little accidental

protein, and second, I will never, ever have to worry about them coming back to my house again. There is nothing scarier to children than real food.

Sometimes I go to my grocery store to buy food, not candy, but it's getting harder and harder. All I needed last week was olive oil and bread, but the olive oil was next to the seasonal M&Ms and the XXXL children's clothes, and the bread was next to the fruit-free "froot" roll-ups and cellphone chargers. (Good thing, too. I had to buy a third cellphone charger last week. I left the first one plugged into the wall at a hotel, and the second at a charger station in an airport. Both times, I kept telling myself "Don't forget the charger!" And I didn't. I remembered them as soon as it was too late to go back for them.)

They say not to go grocery shopping when you're hungry. So I ate the last of the Easter candy before I went this time. Besides, I wanted to get rid of it before it went stale. But not being hungry doesn't stop me from buying kitchen utensils, flowers, Halloween cards, that new vodka that tastes like bubble gum, car wax, hair gel, one of those new razors that make it look as if you haven't shaved at all, scented candles, a bottle of pills that will help my memory (which, it turns out, I already had a full bottle at home), a DVD of the last Bond movie and some sports socks.

I had to go back an hour later because I forgot to get the chicken I had gone in for.

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