

Boating with Missy

By Melissa Gervais

Stillness

If you had told me that I could spend a few weeks at home, not working and just puttering, I would have said, “Absolutely!” I have a long list of chores, books to read, gardens to weed, and movies to watch so it would be super appealing to me. Even if you had said, “But wait, there is this catch: you can’t go out, and supplies may be limited.” I’m a boater, so I have that skill set nailed. I can ration my food and make meal plans for weeks, living from a small freezer and canned goods. I can also manage toilet paper better than most. Given a chance, I can repair almost anything with a hairpin and some nail glue.

Be careful what you wish for. My pandemic staycation started strong with some drawer-cleaning and closet purging, but very soon thereafter, it started to stall. I’m not tired, but I have no energy, like some kind of funky malaise. It has now been almost a month of being housebound, and I am feeling totally out of sorts. My real hair color is poking through, and I would kill for a mani/pedi. I also really need a hug.

Recently, I went online to look for some inspiration and found an article by psychotherapist Natasha Hinde titled, “*It’s Totally Normal To Feel Weird, Anxious, or Scared Right Now. We’re In A Period Of Grief.*”

In this piece that was published in Huffington Post, Hinde writes, “It’s absolutely normal to feel shock, denial, and anger. But also to feel overwhelmed, depressed, and helpless – these are all part of the cycle of grief.” This was the light bulb moment for me as it described my feelings perfectly. It wasn’t just my world that had turned upside down, but the entire world had changed drastically and there it was: grief.

It made me feel better to know that I wasn’t alone, but what next? The therapist went on to say that, “The way we can get our sense of self back is by focusing not on

what you can’t control, but what you can control.” That made perfect sense.

However, there was a small glitch. All of the marinas, outstations, and marine parks in my local waters are closed indefinitely, and it is still quite chilly in the Pacific Northwest to be at anchor. If I couldn’t get out on the boat, what would be the next best thing? Flash of genius. I have a huge collection of boating photographs on my computer, laptop, phone, and numerous SD cards. Organizing this collection has been on my “rainy day” list for quite some time, and it seemed like the perfect therapy to get me out of my head. I use a program called Adobe Photoshop Elements, and sort photos by the date taken and then tag them with people’s names and places. I even share them with my friends, who, as it turns out, were experiencing a similar funk. I worked on this for a couple of hours a day for a week and a half. I felt organized, and my heart was flooded with good memories. Brilliant and cathartic.

The world has taken a collective sigh, and we know that we have to be patient, kind, and make the best of a very difficult situation. We must remain positive and take advantage of this isolation to spend some time reflecting. American author Vi Keeland writes, “If you want to know where your heart is, look where your mind goes when it wanders.” I believe she was talking about a torrid romance, but I immediately jumped to one of my favorite boating moments.

It was a beautiful, sunny morning, and my boat was stern-tied in Smuggler Cove Marine Park on the south side of Sechelt Peninsula near Secret Cove on the Sunshine Coast. I had just rowed back from taking the dog ashore and had gone below to make coffee. When I returned to the back deck, to my shock, I noticed a harbor seal in the dinghy! She had her head resting on the ditch bag, eyes closed facing the sun. I hadn’t heard a single splash or noise and stared dumbfounded until I frantically thought, “Where is the dog?” I turned to see my old Irish Setter, Kennedy, curled up in the deck chair with his grey chin perched on the armrest, eyes closed facing the sun.

There was so much trust at this moment. Trust that I wouldn’t scream and yell at the seal to go back into the water. Trust that the dog wouldn’t launch into the dinghy and end up in some kind of aquatic tussle. There was only stillness. I took a seat in the deck chair opposite my dog, closed my eyes, and turned my face to the sun. **NWY**



Nothing bothers his spirit, which is a great comfort.



Missy grew up boating with her family in the Gulf Islands. She works for a yacht services company based in Vancouver, B.C. and boats most weekends from April to October. A self-proclaimed weekend warrior, she enjoys blogging about everything cool for women who boat at missygoesboating.com.