

I sit on the sofa with my feet resting up on the arm. It's a short sofa, and my legs are longer than most. I find myself distracted by the quilt that is thrown on the back of the sofa, someone has placed it upside down displaying the many wondrous flags of the 1860's, and I wonder how many of those flags still look the same.

I'm not left wondering on this topic for long though, as I catch movement in the corner of my eye and shift my gaze out the window. A man is walking his large black Labrador past my house. I smile, wondering what the dog's name is, will it stop and sniff at the entrance to our property, I wonder if this is one of the many dogs our beloved pooch use to run up and greet. Doubtful, as I've never seen this dog before, perhaps he and his owner are new to the area, perhaps they are tourists out for a stroll, after all it's tourist season on our little island.

I try to pull myself back to the story I was going to write about Bess, the tired Mom packing her house up who collapses on the sofa one evening. She's so sore and tired she doesn't care that she's grimy and just wants to sleep the deep sleep that will help her awake rested, refreshed, and ready for a new day. I envision a clamouring of other family members, eager for food, perhaps she calls for a pizza or has something in the depths of her freezer she can whip up while everyone showers and pulls on fresh pyjamas.

Bess's story escapes me as I hear my named called from the home office and I wander off to find out what's up. I return to my spot on the sofa, my writing desk taken over by the in-house artist who is working on sketches for a card game he's working on, only to hear a child call out. He's going stir crazy and wants to get out of the house. "Maybe after lunch," I call back. He counters with a suggestion for dinner. I sigh.

I manage another four words of Bess' unwritten story when the washer begins it's incessant screaming. I close my eyes pretending I can't hear it and wondering why anyone had to install an alarm on a washing machine to indicate it's finished. I can hear them all day everyday around my neighbourhood.

I debate the word choice in Bess' story and rearrange the first sentence a half dozen times when a text message floats across my screen. My heart misses a beat as I pause to read it. It's not bad news, it's just that I've gotten a fair bit of difficult news over the years through

text and I tend to panic just a little when I get new message these days.

The child is now sending me links so I don't forget the title of the latest book he'd love to read. I consider responding with the titles of the ten books I picked him up from the library yesterday, but I refrain and return my attention to Bess.

Yet, I am distracted again because now I am cold. Yes, it is summer where I live, it's rather warm out, with a horrific rate of humidity. I can barely see the mountains on the far northern side of my house from the heat haze, and I'm sure if I turned westward the ocean would be just as difficult to see, but I'm inside with the air conditioning on low enough that I have a shiver running up my spine. Curse that summertime asthma!

I debate pausing everything and blow drying my hair which would certainly help me warm up, but then I'd have to walk past the mob of people eager for me to finish writing, after all I did threaten life and limb if I was disturbed again and the lunch hour is fast approaching.

Still, the shivering must be stifled. Never mind, there are plenty of quilts in this room, one is bound to help me out. By the time I'm settled again Bess has moved on without me, I'm pretty sure she is sleeping because no matter how hard I search for her I can't find her.

I sigh, lay down my pen, and stare aimlessly out the window.



Author's Note:

Dear Readers,

I hope you haven't thought I've abandoned my story telling. It's been quite the bumpy ride around here, and in the ever funny words of my family, "the 2020-est 2021 ever!" I'm beginning to think that's become our family slogan for dealing with difficult times and tasks.

We really did not have as difficult a 2020 as I know many around the world did. Yes, we had

ups and downs, lockdowns, and fears. Food shortages, hygiene shortages, and job closures. Yet, we had each other and we did our best to make the most of each and every day. We held gaming championships, read books, watched non-stop football games, dragged the table into the middle of our backyard for random picnics and gaming events, held fire pit chat nights, star gazed, and joined a few video chat meetings.

Yet, there was a simple coziness to it. Sure, we missed friends and normalcy, but it was hard to beat cozying up with loved ones under homemade quilts. To recount family stories, childhood memories, to share what we were currently reading about, to dream wildly and laugh all the while.

2021 arrived a little differently in our home. We rang it in with all the glory and splendour that 12 straight hours of partying can afford. And as we lit our New Year sparklers and the wind instantly extinguished them we laughed and tried again, and again, and again until the bitter arctic wind drove us inside. An odd temperature for the middle of summer!

We packed away the party fun and set about packing everything else in our home too, for we were about to embark on another great adventure! I'm all for adventures, but I confess that as I get older they weary me a bit more than they use to. I worry about the smallest of details that I use to leave up in the air and faced it only when I could no longer ignore them.

Moving across the world is quite the adventure, isn't it? We spent weeks readying our home for sale, and many nights, like the fictional Bess I attempted to write about, I found myself collapsing into the sofa covered in packing tape, dust, bird feathers, and any number of other odd bits of debris. There were voices, deep and booming, wondering what was for supper, and I sat there wishing I could pick up the phone and order a pizza. Curse those food allergies!

Instead I pulled my sore self up off the sofa and the others followed to help pitch in and pull together a meal. One such night they sent me off to the shower while they made hamburgers, cole slaw, and salad. It may still be one of the best meals I've ever eaten.

The thing about adventures, just like writing stories, is that sometimes they take us on

unexpected twists. Our home was officially listed on the market one sunny Monday, and within a matter of hours we had an endless list of people who wanted to tromp through our home. We devised a plan of action for how we'd set the home up, hide things that were "in the way", and clear out in time to allow the viewings to happen. By the sixth viewing in one week I must confess we'd begun to forget exactly where I'd hidden things, you know like the remote control, my planner, the toothbrushes for goodness sake!

And then, just as quickly as the house was on the market, we had offers, signed a contract, and set a date to officially close off the sale. We rejoiced at no longer having to hide things, and then reality set in. All the boxes to pack, the movers to hire, the knowledge that 1000 moving containers are lost at sea every year, would ours be amongst those lost? Did the sea creatures have fun adding new additions to their habitats? I suddenly envisioned a shark in a tutu, a sea turtle whipping up some pancakes, and a whale relaxing in someone's arm chair.

Our adventure is not over, we are still living it as I type this from the sofa in my home library. There are still so many small details to work out, and a few big ones as well. There's a new closing date on the table that has left me breathless, yet I am determined to keep a smile firmly planted on my face.

Not because I want to fake it until I make it, nor because I want to suppress all the emotions that such a large move entails. Heavens, no! I keep a smile firmly planted on my face, because I am reminded of the words my father spoke to me many years ago. He'd gotten some difficult news regarding his own health, and the family was pretty shaken by it. Yet, there stood Dad at the kitchen counter dishing up his food laughing and joking around. I couldn't help myself and commented, "I don't understand how you can be laughing so much when you just got bad news, aren't you even a little worried?"

He shrugged and said, "You always have a choice about how you react, you can laugh about it or you can cry about it. I'm choosing to laugh." I'm not gonna say that I haven't shed a few tears in my most difficult moments of this great adventure, but I'd like to think that I've smiled more than I've cried. That I've reflected on the good and the beautiful, that I've reminded my children that despite the harder days there's always a glimmer of hope if we look for it. After all, what's an adventure without hope?

## The Adventure Begins

I wanted to thank those of you who reached out and asked if all was well and lamented how much they were missing the weekly stories to their inbox. While I can't promise continued stories until the dust settles from our current adventure, they certainly will when the adventure is wrapped up, the cloaks neatly hung, and the walking sticks packed away.

*The Reluctant Author.*

