

This inconvenience turned out all write

Phyllis Humby - September 2020

I was checking out my sex horoscope on Cosmopolitan when I felt something scrambling around my bare feet. It's probably the resident chipmunk, I thought, as I re-read the forecast for the weekend. When a red squirrel raced out from under my chair, I jumped. Yikes! Toe nibbling just took on a whole different meaning. Not everything has been that thrilling this summer. I'm referring to the close call with the squirrel, not the horoscope.

I've been avoiding my favourite summerly activities like the plague. Oops, sorry. Mostly I've been parked on the verandah plein air writing (not sure if that's an actual thing) and talking to the wildlife around our place. Not the neighbours; I mean the bunnies, and chipmunks, and, yes, the red squirrels.

It was a scorcher of an afternoon when I popped downtown to make a quick pickup. When I emerged from the store my body slumped. Bad news... A bloody huge transport was unloading behind my car and it wouldn't be leaving anytime soon. Good news... The ice cream kiosk was directly across from me.

With trepidation I asked for a soft-serve chocolate-dipped cone. Why would I have qualms about asking for ice cream, you say? Well, one time they were cleaning the machine and informed me there'd be no soft cones for an hour. You can imagine my crushing disappointment. Especially since I'd waited while the kid ahead of me ordered some unrecognizable scoops, and when it was almost in his hands, he asked for gummy bears... with a sprinkle of M&M's, too. And all I wanted was a soft-serve cone. With chocolate. Geesh! I couldn't believe my misfortune. Bad timing, really.

Anyway, because of that darn delivery truck (wink) I was back at the ice cream kiosk ordering my special. As always, I never specified a size. If they ask, I tell them 'small', but if they say 'regular?', then I just say, sure. Besides, it's not that much bigger. If they ever said 'large?' – which they haven't – I'd probably shrug and say, why not. I'm easy to get along with that way.

The benches along the street were in use but the seating in the little garden area at The Village Bookshop was unoccupied. It felt good to remove my mask and enjoy my unanticipated treat. Both the entrance and exit of the bookstore were in full view. As the shoppers went into the store, I transmitted a telepathic message – well, I tried, okay? – for them to purchase my book. Not sure if it worked, but who's to say it didn't.

How cool would it have been to see someone walk out with a copy? If not for the chocolate coating sliding off my ice cream and onto my hand – so distressing – I could rush forward and offer to sign their book. I'd have to quickly pull on my mask first and ask them to wait while I ran into the bookstore for a glove. Forget it! You could turn an awkward situation 2020 pretty fast. Get it? 2020? Disastrous? Right. It would be better left as a private feel-good moment for me and no one would be the wiser.

Being inconvenienced by that truck was a stroke of luck. Relaxing in the shade eating ice cream, people watching, and what-if dreaming had turned into the best part of my day. I idly thought of the cars parked next to mine and wondered if the other drivers had found an equally enjoyable pastime, or if they were still nattering at the delivery guy to get a move on.

