

“Landlubber”  
a tale in three vignettes

I stood in line at Quizno's and the sandwich makers told me I was standing in the wrong place. They pointed to where I was supposed to be. Giggles emanated from the impatient people behind who shook their heads over my apparent ignorance. The gas station man later told me, no, not that way, this way. No, not that button, this button. Then, the token for the car wash fell, so he gave me another one. I inserted it into the coin slot and entered the car wash. But, it hadn't started yet. Oh, no, what did I do wrong? I wondered. I kept inching my way in, waiting for it to start. A car behind me entered, so there was no way out, except forward. The car wash still wouldn't start. Finally, when I had pulled all the way through the car wash, it began behind my car! The scrubbers and swishers swayed back and forth without a car to wash! The people in the car behind me were cracking up. I felt so foolish, not being able to get around in this world of gadgets, buttons, pavement, concrete, and asphalt.

The computer froze up one day, because I clicked the mouse too many times in too many places. What have I done? Where did that screen go? What happened to my document?! The computer whiz shook his head and asked, what did you do? I don't know what I did. I just wanted to.... bang something, smash something, because I am so frustrated with this world of ding, goes the washer when the washing is done. Beep beep beep goes my car when I'm backing up, as if I didn't know it! Beep beep beep goes the microwave when it stops. Bang bang bang goes the gun on the news and I wonder if anyone else feels the way I do, like someone not meant for this world.

My husband and I took a trip out to the Channel Islands off the coast of California and I got seasick, not in the way you imagine, but when you are out of your element and cast adrift into a world not your own. Over on the bow gathered the people of money and leisure, with their champagne and their crusty bread sandwiches of spreads I've never tasted. One woman tipped her head to the sky and laughed so perfectly. I hurried below deck where all the really seasick ones were seated. They ignored me, probably hoping I wouldn't see them. I was glad for that, because when I stuffed myself into the closet that housed only the toilet, because that was all that fit, the real adventure began. Not the one of Orca whales and dolphins delightfully dancing over the great swells that rocked the boat side to side, tipping so far until my face nearly kissed the ocean before throwing me back again, but the one that required me to walk like Popeye. Landlubber I am, after I used the toilet, I banged against one wall to the next, struggling to pull up my underwear and pants. I nearly banged against the door I neglected to secure, imagining myself spilling out onto the floor, splayed most unladylike into the sufferers nauseous green nightmare, pants down around my ankles! No, that is not going to happen, I told myself. So, I pulled myself up by my big girl pants and exited the closet, swaggering onto the deck like an old salt. The next swell rose and I fell against someone. They didn't notice, because they were too busy spewing their lunch over the lee side of the boat. Once we docked, the island tour promptly took place, about the family who lived there and the children who rode the boat to and from their studies on the mainland. The plane carrying more tour members arrived and I wondered why we didn't just fly there.

It was the trip back to the mainland, when the seas calmed and my tears dried and my envy of all the rich, who drink their lovely bubbly from delicate crystal stemware, were forgotten in the dark and starry night, when I finally became thankful. The boat neared the harbor and I was so glad, not for the trip to end, but for it happening at all. If we had not gone out to sea, we would not have seen the beautiful lights upon the dark ocean waters reflected from shore. The palm trees strung with golden lights shimmered through the mist in my eyes and I was taken once more, not to the island of romantic dreams, but to the mainland surprising me so sweetly with its bright colors. I fell in love again and cried in joy, at last discovering the world I was truly meant to find.