



## Make Your Own Movie

*Dear Aunt Bossy,*

*I am struggling with how to be happy in these horrible and universal circumstances. Please help.*

*Pearl*

Dear Pearl,

My reaction to your name was the beginning of my answering your question. “The world is your oyster,” immediately popped into my head, and I laughed out loud.

I’ve trained myself to amuse myself under all circumstances, which is what I would advise everyone to do. If you can train your mind to amuse you, to see the humor or story or beauty in everything, you will always be all right.

At the moment, I am dealing with a very painful situation beyond the isolation of Covid. Two

women I know are trying to destroy my friendships, and, thus, my life. They do not care who they hurt as long as they hurt me. Lying, betraying: it is nothing to them in their quest. It is a social coronavirus for sure.

It, of course, hurts me to know that people would be so evil, and really hurts me that they would hurt my friends to try and hurt me. But, here is how I handle it, and how I handle the state of the universe today: I amuse myself.

How does a person do that? Everything, even this harrowing behavior by people I once loved, can be enjoyed if you look at it as a story, a drama. It is even humorous if you think of them scrambling around, coming up with their story, plotting and planning, and, eventually going back to their little lives, searching for their next victim. It is the basic secret to the plot of so much humor. The coyote is constantly tormenting the roadrunner, and every time the roadrunner runs off to much laughter. Elmer Fudd and that "Cwazy Wabbit" also come to mind. (I dearly hope children today are familiar with these cartoons, but my age may be showing.)

Even in something like the horrible, destructive Covid, there is humor to be found. People driving around alone in their cars, wearing a mask, breathing their own unhealthy breath. People leaping away from you in public, even when you are both wearing a mask and are at least six feet apart. That might not be laugh out loud funny, but it is certainly amusing in the same way watching monkeys interacting is amusing.

No matter your circumstances, you can amuse yourself, especially in the breathtakingly beautiful Lowcountry, by walking out your door. If you just stop, breathe, and take in our surroundings, you will find joy, even if you have to return to a place you'd rather not live. If you are forced to wait in line to pick up food at a food bank, you can talk to those around you and share stories of the good times. When I lived in New York and bus exhaust hit my leg in the summer, I trained myself to think, "That would feel great in the winter."

There is always a way. Even in the most horrible circumstances, like the death of a loved one, you can remind yourself that they are all right now, and you have the opportunity to learn a lot through grief.

It takes time to train your brain to do this, but you can start by looking for things that bring joy,

and discovering a “story” behind every human interaction. It is fascinating.

And, you can always take a break and distract yourself at the Beaufort International Film Festival. As the late lyricist, Fran Landesmann wrote, and she wasn’t just writing about films,

“Don’t cry, baby, it’s only a movie

It’s only a picture show

Look and you’ll see all the buildings are cardboard

That’s only white sugar snow

Don’t cry, baby, that wound isn’t bleeding

It’s only tomato sauce

Don’t get upset when they are pounding the nails in

It’s only a cardboard cross

The wind machine keeps grinding

The thunder’s just a drum

The film goes on unwinding

And will till Kingdom come

Don't cry baby, when somebody leaves you

The script called for him to go

Just remember it's only a movie

It's only a picture show."

P.S. Fran Landesmann was a friend and she gave me the best advice I ever got, which is very useful in times like these: "Don't hug the thorns."

Stay strong, Pearl. The world really is your oyster. It's where you grow, and grow more beautiful.

Love,

Aunt Bossy