

The Vagabond

The decision to leave the rat race and slow down the pace of life came rather quickly.

After an event-filled summer with the passing of my father-in-law, and the sudden disappearance of my office computer and all its files, we came to the conclusion that mountain biking, running, hiking the trails, and golfing, was enough of a lure to scrap the high-pressure jobs and move into a more healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Once we got passed the point of telling the children, work, family and friends, reality hit that our house needed a little sprucing up before we could put it on the market and move to a smaller home a little further north.

On my fifth straight day of sprucing, I ran out of paint. (I am not by any means a professional painter – I'm just too frugal to hire someone for a job I think I can do myself). It was early enough in the day that I couldn't possibly call it quits quite yet to head out on my bike for a ride in the trails.

So off to the hardware store I went. I parked the car. Dashed in, went straight to the paint counter. Chatted with the sales clerk while he mixed the paint, asked advice on a thing or two, and then headed to the cashier to pay.

On the way I passed a stack of full-length mirrors for sale. I took a glance and noticed the reflection of a vagabond wandering through the store. Startled, I looked again and realized to my horror, the vagabond was me.

I forgot the cardinal rule I as I left the house and didn't do a quick mirror check to ensure I was somewhat presentable.

Stunned, I stopped and stared in the mirror. The vagabond stared back. She was wearing cropped pants so old I'm not sure they were ever in style. They were four sizes too big and were held up by a shoe lace cinched tightly at the hips.

Then there was the t-shirt. Ten years ago a Canadian brewery offered a free XL t-shirt with the purchase of twenty-four beer, but that didn't mean people had to actually wear them. And this one was rather tired looking from over-use. There were holes, stains, rips, paint and in all honesty, after years of abuse, it wasn't even recognizable as a t-shirt.

Her feet were the worst. Who wears un-matched white socks in ratty old Birkenstock sandals? UN-MATCHED! The socks did not match. Who wakes up in the morning and thinks its okay to don a pair of socks when they aren't actually a pair?

Don't even get me started on the hair.

I tore my eyes away from the mirror and shuffled off to pay, head hanging low, hoping for anonymity. I paid as fast as humanly possible, and hurried to the car. Three steps away I heard it. The dreaded call of recognition.

"Oh my gawwwwd, Louise, is that you?"

I cringed, turned and prayed there was another Louise standing nearby. An old colleague from my corporate days skipped cheerily in my direction.

I was doomed.

This is the lesson for today. Although you would think I would want to remind you to always do a mirror check before heading out of the house, and as good advice as that is, the lesson is more about finding the humour in everything you say and do.

Painting, for me, isn't a favourite job. Prepping the house for sale, also not on my best-things-to-do list. Nor is shopping for anything other than books and bikes.

It would have been far too easy to drift into the ho-hum-ness of the painting chore. It would have been even easier to feel a sense of irritation, maybe even anger that I had run out of paint and had to waste valuable time running off to the store, an activity I dislike at the best of times.

And then there is the whole shock of seeing myself in a mirror, out in public, looking like I reside under a bridge with a brown paper bag and mystery liquid as my best friend.

But, had I chosen the disgruntled route, I would have missed out on one of the best laughs I have had in years. After I got in the car, I started smiling at the hilarity of it all, and ended up laughing so hard tears streamed down my cheeks and my belly hurt.

My old colleague had looked sadly at me as though I had fallen from the good graces and time had not been kind to me. I found that funny. Enough so that I never set the story straight. I found that even funnier.

Finding humour in our own mistakes and blunders doesn't come naturally for everyone. It can be work, so next time you find yourself saying or doing something goofy, take a step back, picture it being fodder for a stand-up comedian, and let your laughter spill out until your belly hurts. Trust me when I say, you will feel energized, liberated and full of self-confidence when you can see the funny side of your less than perfect self.

Enjoy the journey,
Louise

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