

Dearest friend,

And so here we are in the endless spiral that is life, staring at the microwave clock that marks the passage of our days in countless tiny glances. (Is it too late for that next cup of coffee? Has the warming plate switched off yet? Should I make a new pot or nuke it for a minute? Can I really tell the difference between fresh coffee and the “stale” coffee anyhow? Is there a difference?)

No matter how often it happens, each time that little digital clock face shows repeating numbers (11:11... 5:55... 2:22) and my eyes happen to catch that minute, it feels like a tiny bit of good luck.

I've been banking all that good luck for next year.

After decades of waiting, this was the year that I finally decided that enough was enough: no more waiting for Mr. Right and the shopping spree that is a wedding gift registry that follows... I bought the good vacuum myself. And while I know that others will be filling my mailbox with missives of their Mr's and Mrs's and the Kiddos, let me tell you, life is too short not to own the good vacuum. Not the flashy designer brand that those suckers buy, but that sleek, German machine that makes eradicating the dust bunnies almost fun.



Speaking of German, with that European vacation on hold both given global events (and my layoff—at least I have time for all that house cleaning now!) I've found other ways to bring the Continent to me. Every Friday around noon I pour myself a warm Heineken and crank up “Munich's HitRadio Charivari HitMix” on my internet radio—neighbor's company Zoom meetings be damned! And the Rick Steves fan fic (you might have seen me posting the links on Facebook since around February) is taking off.



In the latest adventure, Rick and I head to Vis, a tiny island off the coast of Croatia to discover the wonders of squid fishing and regional music, while discovering the wonders of our bodies during the long nights spent at a lighthouse pension that can only be accessed by local rowboat. Dinner crackles and sizzles over an open fire—AS DOES OUR LOVE—while waves crash against the rugged, rocky shores outside.

By September Rick and I were solving mysteries locked in the vaults of the Vatican. (You can contribute to my Gofundme to get on the private mailing list for the steamier versions.) Who could have expected that Aunt Arlene's box of pledge drive DVDs would find a new audience? Europe Through the Backdoor: Papal Treasures.

With any luck, along with vaccinations and travel restrictions easing up, I'll be off to collect some new source material in 2022.

Wishing you love, luck, and pleasure this holiday season! *Yours, Janice*

