



Kate's Chat

CONNECTING THROUGH THE COCOON



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The Country is Looking Brighter

I hope you have all been enjoying the nice weather we have been blessed with in the past week. The busy beaches remain closed off but I have been spending my week in my garden with lemonade in hand and my sunhat permanently on my head.

It really is true that Ireland is the better than an foreign country when the weather is good. As a nation, we are obsessed with the weather, complaining for 80% of the year and going bananas on the few days of heat and sunshine that we can grab. Despite our constant rain, we are always hopeful and preparing for the one good day that we can drag out our sunchairs and soak up the Irish sun.

Our positive mentality is what has got us through the worst of the lockdown and now we are finally seeing the sunshine at the end of the tunnel.



My Gardening Tips

Peppery rocket leaves, mild wild garlic, chives, parsley, mint - and the wonderful edible flowers of borage and nasturtiums are staples in my garden and tunnel because welcoming these voracious weed-like edibles mean that, virtually all year round - there is SOMETHING pretty and delicious to put on my table. This time of year, these are flourishing but - they can take over. The key is to plan where you put them so that they can spread- but not bully seasonal veg and flowers. Yum. Enjoy!

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Hurricane

‘Will you sit down and relax. You’re unnerving.’

I was compulsively pottering from room to room, re-arranging candles and matches.

We live on the Atlantic coast. Not near it. *On* it. House, front garden, sea. Hurricane Ophelia was en-route.

Would we survive?

‘That’s because I *am* unnerved,’ I snapped. ‘Memo?’

Hurricane coming.’

The night before I had mistaken the new reports predictions of 130km per hour winds as 130 *miles* per hour. Looking up hurricane scales on the internet I found that made Ophelia a grade 3 hurricane. Just one step away from ‘catastrophic’. I had already been to my mothers house and put her garden furniture away, but now I was worried about her heavy pots. I had visions of them bashing through her kitchen door and giving her a heart attack. I should have bought her home with me, but now we were under a red warning- orders not to leave the house. Did the farmer next door bring his bulls in?’ I’m sure I saw a cow flying through the air on the internet. Or was that a tornado? What’s the difference again?

‘She’s been downgraded to a storm,’ my husband reminded me.

But it was too late. I had whipped myself up into a frenzy of Hollywood-disaster-movie excitement.

The kids were off school, but the two of us were busy and had planned do some work. However, I could not concentrate on anything other than the storm. Niall managed to get a few hours in the morning, but by lunchtime we were both glued to RTE and news of the massive ESB outages, the image of that roof flying across Cork and, of course, the three tragic deaths.

Warnings of when and how it would affect the Northwest had us rigid in our seats.

Tommo had been on the iPad and X-box continuously since dawn - justified by the fact that there would probably be no electricity in the days to come so he was entitled to a technology blow-out.

‘Is the storm here yet?’ he asked, out of politeness than interest.

‘Not yet,’ I said. ‘A bit. Well, not really.’

It had been a wet windy morning, not one you would want to go out in anyway. But with the whole country

on red alert, we did not even open the patio door. The only action was a bit of black plastic blowing onto the patio then clinging to the bottom of the utility room door. Around lunchtime everything went eerily quiet – the eye of the storm. Niall and I walked up to our back garden. Very wet but that was it. A branch on a tree near the tunnel had snapped. ‘I’ve been meaning to cut that down for ages,’ Niall said.

As the breeze picked up we went back into the house. We had been warned that we would be feeling the full force of the storm at about 3pm. I was a nervous wreck - excitement more than fear. Candles, kids off school, the streets empty and everybody locked their houses – it felt a bit like Christmas. ‘I’d better put some dinner on,’ I said. ‘This could be our last meal out of the oven for a while. Thank God we have a gas hob!’ Nobody contradicted me or said I was being dramatic, which made a nice change. Three came and went. A gust of wind briefly flattened our neighbours shrubs and we rushed to the windows thinking - here it comes - but no. It all settled down again. As the light faded outside we sat and watched the drama continuing to unfold on the news. Lashing waves across the Galway coast - just down the road. ‘Stay away from coastal areas!’ Yikes! We could have a tsunami! As day turned to night and nothing happened my terror became replaced with a kind of irritable restlessness. If this storm was going to batter us - then hurry up and get on with it.

Finally the Mayo and Sligo correspondent came on and said the storm had passed and our counties we were more or less off the hook. Our cosy corner of the coast had been miraculously swerved. I was outwardly grateful, but inwardly petulantly disappointed. Where was this big drama I had been promised? I had put candles in saucers! I’d have to take them all out again!

I went upstairs and looked out at the snapped branch above the tunnel. That was a big branch. Perhaps there had been more wind after all. Suddenly, I remembered the news earlier. A middle aged woman, my age, had died when a tree fell on her car. She had driving her mother, probably to her house to keep her safe from the impending storm. It could have been me. But it wasn’t.

Sometimes even real clouds have a silver lining.