

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Dear Customer,

Still in the South of France and at a loss as what to tell you about, zombified by the sun as I am, other than it has been 37C with no breeze at all and a portable air conditioning unit which sends cold air out of the front and hot air out of the back, net effect no reduction in temperature at all. And it floods the floor with water. So I was just about acclimatised to 33C but there was no stopping it's upward creep. My friend had to ban me from going to the car to check the temperature as I was getting neurotic about it – coming back with a report each time. They kept promising the Mistral, 90kph winds but they never came. Early mornings and early evenings are glorious though. I do think the hottest is behind us now, having used the power of my mind to drive it northwards into central and northern France and over to you in the UK.

As for bites, they are all under control. I only get bitten now when I'm not wearing cider vinegar – usually daytime, usually by ants and they barely bother me as an application of the vinegar also stops any itching and stinging. I am a complete convert, born again, and I use it for everything including sunburn as it takes the heat out. I need to get a new bottle today.

So, at a loss as to what to write about, my friend Claire went above and beyond to create some drama for me. I had barely seen her these last few decades as she has been living in the US, Africa, India, the Middle East – returning to the UK last year. We always had good times together like when I stayed with her when she was living in Paris studying and we decided to hitch to Amsterdam for the weekend and got picked up by a member of the mafia in a black Mercedes who was going to take us to a party and make us into a snuff movie had the police not stopped the car and got us out. That was a close shave.

We are staying at my friend Ingrid's house which backs onto Pampelonne beach, meaning we can get out and swim and swim Myfa early before it fills up. The sea was choppy yesterday morning and I wouldn't let Myfa swim, only paddle. There were some guys in the water but close to the shore. I wasn't going to go in but Claire said she was tempted as she likes waves. "Go on, go for it" I said. She had been a competitive swimmer in her earlier days and had done life-saving. She headed in – her tiny frame with no body mass. She dived through the first wave and started heading out to sea. Why is she doing that I thought, I expected her to go in a bit and then swim close to and parallel to the shore. I could see her head getting smaller and smaller in the distance, I was worried. The waves were crashing at sea. Seeing my concern a woman with her dog said "Elle s'amuse", she's enjoying herself. I wasn't sure. I wanted her to signal to me but my voice or hers wouldn't have been heard above the noisy waves. I was getting really worried. It looked like she was trying to get back to shore but the waves were crashing over her, then she'd be on her back floating. I was looking to see where the lifeguards were, still not knowing if she was ok and having fun... or not. Eventually she got a bit closer and two lifeguards went to the shore and started to go into the sea 'jesus christ' I thought. She raised her arm signalling to them that she was in trouble. I might have taken that as a mere 'hello!' She knew the drill and they went in and brought her out. They put her on a sunbed wrapped her in towels and foil and gave her oxygen and tested her blood pressure while waiting for the 'pompiers' to arrive. I was terrified, it was absolutely horrendous. The lifeguards said that she might have water on her lungs. The 'pompiers' came and checked her out, took off her oxygen and wanted to take her to the hospital in Gassin. Claire was now more recovered and persuaded them that she was ok, she had to sign some paperwork saying she didn't want to go to hospital. They were ok with that as her 'levels' were now fine but said to call them immediately if she felt at all unwell. Back at the house she sat under a blanket, I made her a cup of tea with lots of sugar, and she went to sleep for a few hours and felt fine when she woke up.

I was haunted by the fact I'd said 'Go for it'. I didn't expect her to swim off to sea like that. I asked her why she did it - she told me she was trying to get beyond the waves, was having a great time but then started to feel tired, started trying to come back not realising how far out she'd gone, and that each time she tried to breathe a wave would crash so she couldn't breathe. What a bloody nightmare! After the incident the red flags went up all along the beach and everyone else was cleared out of the sea. I've got cold shivers thinking about it again and writing this. But today is a new day and all is fine!

It was the second round of the 'legislatives' here yesterday. Macron has wiped it. I have been keeping abreast of the awful events there in the UK – the terrorist attacks and of course the Grenfell Tower fire. It's horrendous. Everywhere we go here when people know we are English they want to talk about the fire – it has shocked and horrified on both sides of the Channel.

I hope all is well with you. Recipes again soon !

Kind wishes,

Isobel