



★ **Wild Fierce Life: Dangerous Moments on the Outer Coast**

Joanna Streetly

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Joanna Streetly was just nineteen when she moved to Tofino, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. “It was a time before the technology explosion, when boats were expected to leak, or sink, and boat motors were expected to be fickle,” she writes. “It was an era uncomplicated by cellphones or GPS—or even wealth—when simply having a compass elevated me above those who approached the fog with mumbled prayers, or fingers crossed.” And it was a place that valued a good story.

Streetly’s memoir is filled with the raw intensity of life-or-death moments in the wild, and reflections on how they opened uncharted regions within her. Working as an outdoor guide, leading others on kayak or whale-watching tours, she learned the treachery of this wilderness: how islands that seemed like paradise in the summer were deadly in the winter, blasted by fierce storms.

She tells of being swept out to sea, facing likely death in the cold water, yet feeling only peace; of how lack of daylight and long periods of isolation could disrupt sleep and bring on hallucinations; of her surprise at finding herself swimming alongside a bear; and of fighting her need to prove herself equal to a man in facing challenges thrown at her by this untamed land.

She tells of her years partnered with a First Nations man, and the crumbling of both their float house and their relationship; of conflicts between white and aboriginal peoples; of a new relationship and the birth of a daughter; of learning to balance her fear for her child’s safety with the risk of destroying her delight in the wild.

She has given us good stories of breathtaking adventures, both beautifully crafted and enchanting.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May/June 2018)

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