

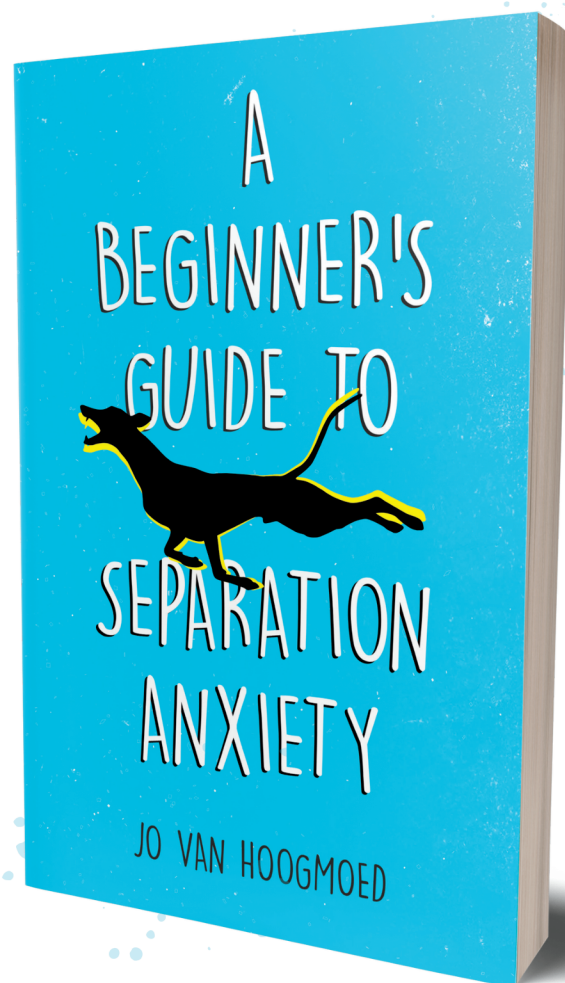
A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SEPARATION ANXIETY

Portia Weaver's life is ... complicated.

There's that imminent career end and that outrageous swap-o-rama scheme devised by her narcissistic ex-husband, the man she still idolizes, and his immune-to-observation wife.

And let's not forget those despicable dognappers, a cat with murderous intent, to-die-for international desserts, conspiring weasels, cycling ladies, a budding love-interest potter, and the unexpected arrival of a greyhound who just happens to talk ... human.

As Portia stumbles through complications and obligations, the latter dictated by the dog, both human and canine, eventually discover 'that something' they've always wanted but never thought to expect.



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Jo van Hoogmoed and Portia Weaver share many attributes. Both had long careers in high-tech and embraced life without log-on when retirement knocked. Where their paths deviate, Hillary, Jo's retired racing greyhound, has never once accused her of enormity of stupid, nor dismissed cycling as a pointless endeavour. In fact, Hillary has kept her own counsel in all conversations and on all observations.

Jo lives in the charming Ontario century town of Orangeville, northwest of Toronto, and has the incredible fortune of having a loud, joyful family —sons and sisters, daughters-in-law and brothers-in-law, and nieces and nephews aplenty. Lucky her.



The doorbell rang twice in quick succession as she swung the door open. Richard. His finger pressed the doorbell one last time. He took a slight step back and gawked. He didn't expect to see anyone other than Portia. *Who was the Asian guy? And why was his nemesis here?* They all nodded to each other.

"Thank you again for that delicious dinner." Patrick, the greyhound rescue director, complimented, looking at Po, but from Rick's angle, his look was to her and Sam. "I can't believe how quickly you two have bonded. I know this will be something special ... very special." He smiled at both. "If you need me, I'm only a phone call away."

Sam chimed in. "Ditto with the lasagna. Ditto with Patrick. The only difference is I can be here in an instant."

Patrick enthusiastically hugged her. "Miracle worker," he whispered in her ear. Sam hugged her too, albeit a little shyly. The two sidled past Richard, who didn't feel it necessary to move. At Patrick's car, they shook hands heartily, Sam giving the other a backslap, then both turned to wave her a cheery goodbye. Po leaned against the door jamb and returned their waves fondly.

Rick's mouth gaped. His hands stayed in his pockets but his foot stepped to the doorsill. "What was that all about? And, why was he here again?" His 'he' referred to Sam.

"I'm interviewing neighbourhood men for three-way sex. It was Sam's second interview," deadpanned Po.

She faced Richard, barring him from placing a second foot inside the house, and said irritably, "I told you not to contact me. We've nothing to talk about. Other than a text with your condo address, the monthly fees, and the sale price. That's all I want. Go home, Richard."

She closed the door firmly. Rick narrowly missed having his foot squashed.



READ MORE IN A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SEPARATION ANXIETY



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AN INTERVIEW WITH JO VAN HOOGMOED

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE *A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SEPARATION ANXIETY*?

Inspiration? This book started as the silliest thing I could think of, spur of the moment, for an online Write a Novel course. A talking dog and a lovelorn nerd were toss-away bits because I didn't want to use any of my good, well-thought-out storylines. But the more I scoped out the characters and plot, the more I fell in love with them. And the silly story? It grew legs.

WHAT WAS ONE OF YOUR FAVOURITE SCENES TO CREATE?

There are many favourites, especially where the main character pulls away from an egotistical ex-husband. But the one scene I still laugh at, despite a hundred reads, is when the ex is at her door, demanding to know why his nemesis and a stranger, both men, were leaving her house. And her response is she's assessing local men for sexual credentials, and for one of them, it was a second interview.

WHAT DO YOU HOPE READERS WILL GET OUT OF *A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO SEPARATION ANXIETY*?

Have a laugh, a breath of calm, a smile. The story's only intent is to be a temporary light-hearted break from a severe, complicated world.