

# Roll Play...

*by Jessica Lloyd-Mostyn*



A few years ago James and I were walking along the cliffs of a Cornish seaside town and I glanced out to sea at a sailboat on the horizon.

“We could just buy a boat and sail round the world.”

That sentence changed everything. He quite rightly laughed at me, as at that time I had never even set foot on a sailboat. But then, as I attended more and more sail training and theory courses, he began to realise that I was serious.

In the beginning I knew nothing about life aboard a yacht, let alone how to control and manoeuvre one. The enthusiasm that I had for the teaching I sought out was so that I could bring my knowledge up to match that of my boyfriend. I wanted us to be equals on the boat, despite the fact that he had more experience than me, in order to be able to support each other in this floating life. Before our Atlantic crossing I even remember telling the two friends who crewed with us that we were interchangeable as skipper.

Two years  
in, the  
added



development of becoming parents aboard has made us both dramatically reconsider this idea and I find myself in the unexpected position of really embracing the differences in our genders.

For starters, James is quite simply far stronger and fitter than I am. He is physically bigger, taller and can endure much more strain. Don't get me wrong, I'm no wimp and I can do

winch grinding with the best of them, but it would be silly and pointless for me to attempt to match his strength. So, certain jobs on board have naturally always

fallen to him. When reefing, it's always him going up to the mast. If we're lifting the dinghy he's the one taking the weight of the engine, and when the windlass breaks and needs to be hefted over to the nearest mechanic it's definitely not me doing the heaving.

But not all our responsibilities are as you might expect. I handle all the passage planning and navigation. It's me that's in charge of dealing with most electronics. I'm, now, always in control of where and how we anchor and if you hear our boat name over the VHF or SSB it's going to be me saying it. James also, surprisingly to some, rules over the kitchen and is a really fantastic chef. I can cook too, but his food is just so much better than mine that, over time we've fallen into a natural rhythm whereby he handles the meals and I wash them up. Frankly, there are just things that each of us can do better than the other and why shouldn't it be so?



Other tasks have always been tackled by us together: engine filter, belt and oil changes, sail flaking and rope coiling; even the taking apart of the

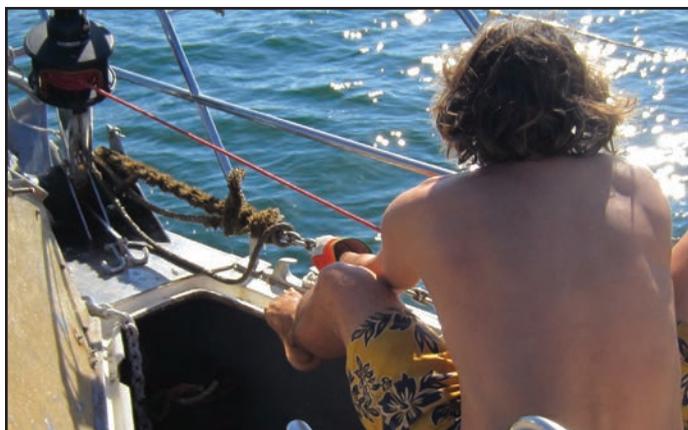
head's plumbing can be turned into a much more manageable duty when there are four hands working on it. We're also aware of just how fortunate we are that this trip, our exploration of the globe by boat, has been a plan that we made jointly.

Yet our new status as cruising parents has made certain inevitable changes to our established systems and we've weirdly become quite comfortable with it.

It started with the pregnancy itself, as I remained on board and we kept sailing up until I was 32 weeks. I was fortunate enough to not suffer from morning sickness, however James gradually had to take over more and more of the work on board as I got a bit slower and clumsier. Whenever I pointed out to him that I felt bad that he was doing everything he would

remark that I was doing everything else, everything necessary for our child to grow.

We tell people how lucky we feel



we are to have stumbled into a lifestyle which enables us to both be around for our daughter all of the time. But the routine



of the father going out to work and the mother staying at home with the baby does still have a resonance even in this regime, as boats need constant attention, maintenance and responsiveness. It's almost as if we have two children already; it's just that one of them is 42 feet and a lot more troublesome!

The majority of our everyday existence now falls into James managing various issues with the boat whilst I take care of Rocket. We're still able to tag-team on certain tasks and talk through them enough to share the mental burden of each job. I have to handle my duties in bursts as I may get interrupted to feed our daughter at any point. So things that can be easily stopped are good for me to do: laundry, washing up, researching. Anything involving chemicals becomes a bit trickier, although I do still handle the majority of the domestic cleaning.

After the Atlantic crossing, but a year and a half before the baby, I turned to James and said that we needed to rethink



the whole two skippers concept. I decided that he needed to be the captain and that I was comfortable with that as one of

us needed to have more clout if we ever disagreed and came to a stalemate. Of course, we've had moments where I've challenged that authority...

Me: "I think we should move. We're anchored too close to that boat."

James: "No we're not. It's fine."

Me: "Yes we are."

James: "No we're not."

<Thump>

James: "Okay, maybe we were."

And I'll admit that I'm far from being above the I-told-you-so smugness that follows such incidents.

But most of the time, for us, I found that it's actually a lot simpler and easier to have one named boat boss as our greatest strength as a sailing team comes from the fact that we complement each other so well with our differences. He's the sailing natural while I was and still am the keen student.

Only now, I'm a little closer to being a graduate while I'm also adapting to my new life as a mum; a mariner mum at that. 🇵🇷