

So this is a Tree Change 2010

The place where one's possessions go for respite is a big wasteland of corrugated iron roller doors ^{all} with their own little padlocks and special codes. The storage place where I sent the goods and chattels of my life for a month before moving in to our new house in the country is a grid of small garages all sitting tight up against each other like a battery hen compound.

Hot and dusty, I watch as the nice-storage-man pulls my roller door down on 'my life thus far' and shows me how to do the pad lock properly. But I want to have one last look so I pretend I need to practice the opening and closing procedure again.

And there it is - the entire contents of my flat all plied and squeezed, stacked and still. There it is! ^{all} my 'worldly goods', (as they say) - except for a few clothes and books, my son's ^{school bag} and my laptop. Oh, and our toothbrushes and my special new exorbitantly priced 'face cream for ageing skin' and Bear.

My son hadn't expressed ^{any} interest in fluffy toys for nearly 2 years but when I'd asked him what he wanted to take with him for the month, he'd foraged around ^{his} room and come up with three things: ^{his} Pokémon cards (all 243 of them), ^{his} Texas and Bear. (Suddenly he's getting all cuddly and regressed on me.) Over these past few weeks he's ^{ever} been sleeping with Bear so that during the relentless humidity of the night when I go check on him, he and Bear are glued together like Pompeii victims.

We're staying with a friend and her daughter in 'our new tree change town' and I am realising just how much my son loves company. An only child who spends a lot of time with his mother is discovering the ^{sheer} joy of waking up in a house with not only another kid but another grown up ^{too}, who he's not related to and who doesn't mind him getting into bed with her in the morning either. I am also realising how much this move has affected him and how because he is so verbal I'd thought he was handling with more alacrity than he actually is.

On one 27-degree night in our friend's old farmhouse ^{where,} ^{one} with the mosquitoes on acid and the ~~crickets~~ ^{cockroaches} on overtime, he cries out in his half-awake and restless state like a Linda Blair impersonator.

I don't know who I am. Who am I? I can't sleep. I can't stay awake. I feel sick Mama. I feel sick but not in my stomach, just everywhere!

It was a bit scary. ~~It~~ sounded like he was having some kind of hysterical existential crisis and I didn't really know how to help him. Finally he ~~went to~~ ^{calmed down} sleep with my telling him that I was feeling the same way about everything and that sometimes change is really hard and that I didn't know who I was either and that it's just that grown ups are able to cover it up ^{sick} ~~the~~ ^{psychic confusion} more than kids can. (This isn't altogether true, of course but it was 2 in the morning and he is only 7.) I also put the fan right up close to him and ^{made} ~~made~~ up some incoherent story about a child who moves towns ^{and his little hero's journey with all its obstacles and triumphs.} But I fell asleep around about the time the central protagonist-kid was just starting to get used to his new school. ^{and} ~~kept~~ ^{The confront} ~~the bullies.~~

So this is a Tree Change?

Oh my God! I have done the thing, the tree-change thing and has anyone even noticed and does anyone care that I feel just a bit weird and like I am trying to live someone else's life, wear someone else's clothes and they don't fit. Yet. They don't fit yet. Once I lose weight and gain country-cred they will fit. Won't they?

But ^{It's} de rigueur to pack up and ship out to a new place these days. It's the 'middle -class but not the ~~quite~~ ^{quite} well off enough to buy a house ~~on one salary~~ in the city thing' to do these days when real estate prices are insane and normal people have got ^{that a} ~~a~~ perennial look of *What the?* about them. It's wise to go further a field (but not too ^{ugly} ~~ugly~~ outer, outer suburbia) where it's more affordable and where you can live a healthier and slower existence. It's good for you. It's good for you children, and it's good for my son, ~~in particular,~~ to live in the same town as his father for the first time in his life.

I walk the streets of my new 'community' (this is such an over used word and so redolent with sentimentality, that I feel clichéd using it.) And anyway, this particular community is not mine yet. I have to earn my stripes, live here for more than a few weeks before I can start making any claims surely.

In this biggish Victorian country town there has been a recent influx of ~~arty~~ intellectual alternatives with casual or single incomes. We are the new migrants, ~~those~~ that the older and original residents of this town probably resent or rue or laugh at for our city, wanky self-conscious ways.

I have always hated the country. It's open spaces and clean air have always made me nervous. Compelled to stay with my father in the country during school holidays I was always lonely or anxious or both. I longed for people and noise and activity. Helping my father mend the fences, feed the chooks, carry out the compost, pick fresh basil were all my idea of hell.

And now in my middle-aged years, my increasingly reclusive and less 'out there' life style has made me more amenable to the idea of this scrub change.

It's the quiet, the space, and the birds I don't recognise that I love now. It's seeing the same people in the street daily that I am liking, not loathing for its inherent provincialism and small-town gruesome familiarity.

And my son, he is good. Coming good now. And his father and stepmother - well we'll never really be friends, let's face it - but at least now it's easier to share the parenting. Now if my son leaves Bear (although he appears to have returned Bear to his formally decorative role) at his father's house, we can actually go pick the thing up because it's 5, not 75 minutes away.

As I take a snap shot in my head of all my stored stuff in its own little garage with its own little pad lock- it's remarkable how 30 years of stuff can fit into such a small rectangle of space - I am struck amused and sad at the same time.

The nice storage man is looking at me now.

You know, sometimes people, usually women, sorry, no offence, get ~~not~~ teary when they see all their things packed on top of each other like ^{that} this. One woman just stood and cried ^{and sored} for ages. I just left her to it.

And he, the nice-storage-man just left me to it too. I realised, (even though I'd always known ^{it} somehow like we do deep down) how insignificant and unnecessary all our stuff *is* in the long run. It's probably got something to do with ~~us~~ all ending up in a box when all's said and done or something. . .

You right to go? Asks the nice-storage-man.

Yeah, OK, I say ~~back~~. Don't think there's anything more I need here.

^{he says}
Righto then. Here's the key. See ya in a month...

~~So this is a tree-change. This is a big new adventure for a grown up, OK. So.~~
~~Embrace the fear and do it anyway.~~

Face

or whatever

The experience
is.

~~Cash~~ Don't