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Web Books Blog



Vignettes from the Mad Dash Edition

For three weeks after selling our house we were more like nomads than vacationers, with no fixed address, just a car full of stuff. What a long dash it was, from North Carolina to San Diego and then up the coast to Oregon. As the cycle of drive/sleep/pack/drive repeated, the days began to blur together, but some moments stand out even now.

Wichita Falls, Texas

To drive an electric car across America is possible with some planning. The closest we came to a problem was a lone charger in the middle of nowhere with a big sign taped to it:

This unit may or may not accept payment. We are aware of the situation, and we are working to resolve it with the manufacturer.

Not working very hard, from the look of the faded sign. Fortunately Schrödinger's Charger came through and we were on our merry way.

Amarillo, Texas

The hotel decor could best be described as Elegant Cowboy. Crossed six-shooters were etched into the elevator floor, stylized portraits of steers hung on the walls, and a genuine Prohibition speakeasy occupied the basement. By the time we walked down the street for a TexMex dinner, the sky was threatening. Back in our spacious room with its cowhide chairs we watched trees sway outside the window. We slept for a little while and then the sirens started. They sounded sporadically throughout the night.

At one point I asked my partner, "Is there a tornado? Should we stand in the hall? Go to the basement?" His snore was his answer.

The next morning I asked the hostess in the breakfast room what the sirens had meant. Turns out there was a tornado at the other end of town, and the hotel manager kept tabs on its location all night in case the guests needed to evacuate to the basement.

We were safe, but I didn't know it.

White Sands, New Mexico

Driving through New Mexico we could watch sand storms form and swirl in the distance. We drove past roadside signs lined up like the old Burma Shave ads:

IN A DUST STORM...

PULL OFF ROADWAY...

TURN VEHICLE OFF...

FEET OFF BRAKES...

STAY BUCKLED.

Why "feet off brakes," I wondered. Is that safer if you get rear ended?

We toured a petroglyph site and my partner mentioned to the park ranger that we planned to visit White Sands. "Not today," he answered. "The winds over there are forty miles an hour. They probably wouldn't let you out of your car, and if they did, it would feel like you were being blasted with a shotgun."

By the time we arrived at the hotel in Alamogordo the wind blew so hard I could barely open the car door. We made it across the parking lot to a lovely Italian restaurant and watched the trees beat the windows in the dirty wind.

San Diego, California

Idyllic weather, as always.

I visited my mother's grave, which now has a gravestone. She died at the height of the pandemic and I could only Zoom in for her memorial. I am so glad Mom was laid to rest in San Diego; I never knew anyone to love this city like she did. Her parents are in that graveyard too, just a few paces away.

After the memorial park we drove to Pacific Beach and I stood in shadows under the pier, two blocks from the site of the cottage where we lived when I was a baby. I watched the wavelets sparkle in the light that flickered between the boards.

End of the Line: Oregon

We arrived in Oregon on a Sunday night. We stayed in a residence hotel among a mixed crowd, in what was essentially a studio apartment with two

burners and no oven. The whole place was brown: brown furniture, tan walls, brown and tan striped carpeting. What a comedown from our five bedroom home back in North Carolina. My brain started playing the "what if" game: What if we don't find a house to rent? What if we have to stay in this one boring room for a long time? What if the broken screen on our first floor unit means people try to break in?

I had to pull myself up short and think: What if this were a step up instead? What if we were truly homeless and not sitting on the proceeds of selling a house? I had to remind myself again and again to be grateful for all I have.

On Monday and Tuesday we looked at houses. On Wednesday we signed a lease. We will move into a house that's just the right size for the two of us in our seventies, with pink and purple flowers and a creek in the back yard.

There was never a moment in all of this travel when I actually worked on my next book. But as we retrieve our belongings from the overstuffed car, the manuscript starts to emerge like a rock from a melting glacier. The book is so close to finished! Soon I will review the marvelous comments from readers and editors, and bring this project to a conclusion. This nomadic phase will end and I'll return to the life of a writer. But I'll never forget all the moments of our travels. They shine like points of light glinting on the water below the Pacific Beach pier.



Keep the pen moving, or the keys clicking.

All the best,

Stella,

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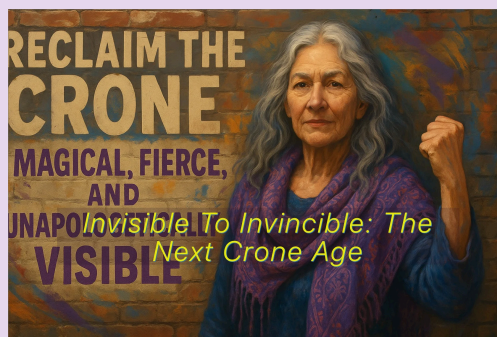


Taking Our Space

Stella Fosse

Space is essential in life just as space between logs is essential for fire. Space rekindles attraction between longtime partners. Taking space between tasks revives us. And giving our grown children space enables them to develop their own lives.

I don't know about you, but for me this business of space is not easy. For example, not only do I live with my partner, he also Indie publishes most of my books. When you live and work with someone, space becomes a challenge. In her fabulous book, [Mating in Captivity](#), Esther Perel uses the fire metaphor to write about space and attraction:



Invisible to Invincible

Judy Cole

Imagine this scenario: You're walking down the street on a warm spring day, enjoying the shop windows full of artfully displayed wares. People smile and nod. Some wave. Some pause to admire you as you pass, maybe one or two even whistle in appreciation.

Then you turn a corner, and suddenly it's as if you've been erased. No nods, no smiles, no whistles. Instead, passersby seem to look right through you as if you're not there. Your first instinct is panic. You attempt to go back the way you came... only the street you were walking on just moments earlier has vanished. Since it's the

Love enjoys knowing everything about you; desire needs mystery. Love likes to shrink the distance that exists between me and you, while desire is energized by it. If intimacy grows through repetition and familiarity, eroticism is numbed by repetition. It thrives on the mysterious, the novel, and the unexpected. Desire is less concerned with where it has already been than passionate about where it can still go. But too often, as couples settle into the comforts of love, they cease to fan the flame of desire. They forget that fire needs air.

The fire of ambition needs air as well. My To-Do List seems to get longer every day, no matter how quickly I run. I know I need down time, but where is it? What a joke to say I'm "retired," especially when I'll soon embark on a [new book launch](#). My To Do List reminds me of the scene in [Frog and Toad Together](#) when the two friends sit on the stoop and watch Toad's list blow down the street. "Aren't you going to chase it?" asks Frog. "Chasing the list was not on the list," says Toad, still seated. What a blessing. That night Toad remembers that going to sleep was on the list.

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only option available, you move forward.

Eventually, you stop at the doorway of a trendy boutique. The funky, eclectic fashions call to you, reminding you of your youth. You step inside. The salespeople flit from customer to customer like efficient bees busily collecting pollen. You, they ignore.

Undaunted, you decide to peruse the merchandise. You spy a lace and paisley blouse, a modern interpretation evocative of a romantic gypsy poet, and you fall in love. The price isn't an issue. You've worked your entire adult life and can well afford an occasional splurge. You take your find to the register where two salesclerks locked in conversation willfully ignore you. Finally, exasperated, you bang on the counter loudly with the flat of your palm. "I'd like to pay for this," you grit out through clenched teeth.

Reluctantly, their gaze turns. It's a relief to know you still exist—until you realize what they see when they look at you is a nuisance that, much to their mutual displeasure, must be dealt with.

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Stella Fosse



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