

I thought I'd have left London and be in my dream country home by now - I was so naive

Katie's expectations of moving into her dream house have suffered a serious setback

By Katie Glass 12 December 2020 • 6:00am



What the hell have I done? CREDIT: Montana Lowery

It is 350 miles from Hampstead Heath (via the ferry at Pembroke) to East Ferry, where one of my bridesmen has offered to lend me his cottage near the Irish coast.

I leave my life packed in a 50 sq ft storage unit and head off with a suitcase and enough cash in the bank from the sale of my flat to flee to Barbados. I am a woman on the run. A one-girl Thelma and Louise. It feels like I've got away with murder and in a way I have – my own. Except this is better because now I can start again.

If it weren't for the minor inconvenience of a global pandemic I could catch a plane and disappear. Instead, I make do with cheap thrills: I celebrate with a drive-through McDonald's and by cancelling all my direct debits: the mortgage, the water, the council tax, the gas.

Now, for the first time, I have no bills, no place to be, no one wondering where I am, no man calling or editor hassling me. My life has imploded, or I have exploded it – depending on the mood I'm in.

For my road trip I have prepared a Dolly Parton-heavy break-up mix. I put it on and hit the M1 in the rain, with all the enthusiasm of someone setting off on Route 66 – following the road into Wales under purple skies, taking detours for fun, climbing the Brecon Beacons, on and on until I reach a tiny mountain village and rent a room over a pub.

I buy a bottle of wine and head to the park. The sky is black, the air clean and fresh. I swig my £5 screwtop bottle of malbec. It is delicious as a Châteauneuf-du-Pape. [It tastes of freedom.](#)

I finish the bottle and stagger back to the pine DFS single bed I'm staying in for the night just as drunk-panic sets in: 'What the hell have I done?'

The next morning the ferry blows me to Ireland, where I sleep for a week. Then spend a month scoffing Guinness bread and making briquette fires, claiming I'm practising for my new life – although I'm doing it in an exquisitely furnished house with central heating.

By the time I return to Land's End it is autumn: the air is muzzy and the red bracken drenched. I drive to my beautiful house – ready to move in.

Anyone who knows anything about buying property will realise what a fantasy this was. Despite all the episodes of Grand Designs I've watched, I was still naive enough to think that I could move into my listed dream home, hiccup-free, within two months. I can picture Kevin McCloud's incredulous face.

As it happens, I return to Cornwall to find we are months from exchanging contracts. Replies from the bank are taking forever; solicitors are overloaded. Now half of the city is following me to Cornwall and the local council office is overwhelmed with Down From London-ers demanding searches.

The delay is agonising. I find myself homeless in a pandemic. My friend Tanya offers to let me move in. In all my fantasies of leaving my fiancé and driving off into the sunset to start a new life, in none of them was I quarantined in a family home, sleeping in a seven-year-old's playroom on a sofa bed.

At night, I tip-toe through Lego pieces, jabbing my feet on blocks of an intergalactic space ship. I lie awake wondering how often is too often to call your solicitor – and beg. '

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