



I've decided to leave London. So now what?

In Katie Glass's first Stella column, she starts to plan her new life

WHEN I TELL friends I have decided to leave London and move to the country they sound concerned. 'Are you OK?' they ask. 'Absolutely!' I laugh. 'Is this because you broke up with the fiancé?' they worry. 'Of course not!' I say. I hope I sound more convincing to them than I do to myself.

Secretly I fret that leaving my fiancé and selling my flat is my embarrassing *Eat, Pray, Love* moment. After all, I am almost 40. Perhaps I am having a midlife crisis? I hope I get a Porsche out of it.

I know I have a terrible habit of dealing with pain by becoming manic. The more upset I am, the more frenetic I get. When my dad died, I cleaned my whole house in a fit, scrubbing walls, sanding floors, repainting doors, defrosting the freezer, bleaching the bathroom. When my flatmate found me outside repainting the windows he begged me to stop.

The last time my fiancé and I broke up (two years ago), I took up weightlifting, entering a competition and winning the dead-lift round with a personal best of 125kg.

Now, as people complain about the boredom of lockdown, I have never been more frantic. I have developed a Rightmove addiction and, instead

of googling wedding dresses, I stay awake binge-shopping for houses, saving properties like I'm filling a basket on Net-a-Porter.

I have bought a property before: a flat in Dalston so noisy it might as well have been in a nightclub, and so poky my friend Rob called it 'the cupboard' – with less affection than I'd have liked. Still, buying a whole house in the countryside is different. It is

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far more exciting probably because I have no idea what I am doing.

I have never thought about whether I want to live by the sea, surrounded by fields, tucked in a village, shaded by forests or on top of a hill.

In London, I was excited to live surrounded by screaming bars and hipster cafés and drug dealers, with dog yoga classes, police sirens and raves on my doorstep – and Soho only half an hour away on the bus.

In the country, I am drawn to the opposite. My cravings are for endless

green views, wide empty fields and lazy sheep. I love the fantasy of house porn, lusting after farmhouses with Agas and open fires, and twee cottages with thatched roofs. 'Do you know how much rethatching costs?' my friends warn. Of course I don't.

It occurs to me that my country fantasy is culled from *Anne of Green Gables* and a *Vogue* cottagecore spread. Do I really want to live in the country or do I just want to wear vintage Laura Ashley and bottle-feed lambs? And if so, perhaps I should just move to London Fields.

I decide to focus my search in Somerset because I lived in Bath as a teenager. Besides, it's only two hours from London, so I can always run back.

I register with estate agents, feeling like a grown-up, but also like I'm playing at being a grown-up, like Tom Hanks in *Big*. They take my name down as 'Mrs Glass.' I correct them: 'Miss Glass.' They send me properties and tell me the local schools are good. I say I don't care about that. 'How many bedrooms do you want?' an estate agent asks. 'I don't mind!' I say. 'Don't be ridiculous,' she snaps. 'How many children do you have?'

I realise I am struggling to find a house because what I am really seeking is a new life and I don't know what it looks like yet.