

# Changing spaces

We're in the process of deciding where we want to live for the next four years. We'll stay in the same city, of course, but there are a couple of options regarding the exact location we want to inhabit. We'll be making a decision very soon one way or another.

For the past year or so, I have been resisting settling in. We haven't unpacked our books; they're in the garage. We still have partially unpacked boxes of various things that are in the living area because we needed something from the box but the rest of it wasn't that important. We haven't gotten any furniture in the past year that we didn't need, though we've thought about a few things. We've been kind of on hold in terms of making the space ours because we knew we wanted something different.

Now that we're looking at a place to spend at least the next four years, I'm changing how I am looking at the space. I want the place we live to be our home, not just a house (or an apartment, as the case may be). I want people to feel welcomed when they come in. I want to be surrounded by things that I like and to have enough space that we don't feel hemmed in. We don't need a lot of stuff, but I'd like the things we have to be pieces that I actively want to live with rather than pieces that we've kind of ended up with. For the current place and the last place, I was unwilling to settle in too far because I knew we'd be moving. This place, though, we'll be settling down in. By the time we leave, Katja will be in elementary school. That means it's time for me to accept that we're staying and make the new place, wherever it is, someplace that we like coming home to every night. It's time to create home.

We know we will have a nice kitchen; we won't move to a place where the kitchen is less nice than our current one. That part's easy. We've already found bookcases we like, so we can

start buying them as we have money. We'll have outdoor space of some sort so we can grow things. Someday I'd love to get a nice rolltop desk. It will mostly be Xander's, but I love the way they look and having one would make me happier than having some other piece of more modern furniture as a desk. There will also be more organizational things such as a bigger wine rack (we don't drink that often, but it would be nice to have more options in the house), a couple of bookcases for Katja, since the current approach includes books falling off on a regular basis, and possibly something other than bookcases for the pantry items. I'd also like a bigger jewelry box at some point. I don't have much, but it's all kind of crammed into a small jewelry box right now.

I want to be able to find everything and not have pockets of clutter. I've lived with pockets of clutter most of my life, since that seems to be my default, but I don't like them. I am calmer, happier, and I work more effectively when everything is organized and sorted. I haven't set up the framework for that, though, so I fall into old habits and end up with, for instance, a pile of papers next to my bed that really ought to be filed soon. I think I'll get to it before we move. I hope so, anyway.

We won't get everything right away, of course. We will buy things in bits and pieces as we have the money. I think, by the time we are ready to move again, that we will be able to be happy with everything we're moving rather than feeling put-upon that we have to move that irritating piece of furniture yet again.

My sense of place has never been particularly strong, but we'll be here for a while and I would like to love where I am rather than simply existing in the space.

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## Monday meander

The longer I wait to start writing again, the harder it becomes to put words on a page, so I am screwing my courage to the sticking place and writing despite the months of silence here.

We'll be moving again hopefully sometime this fall. Our current apartment, while a nice place to be, is too far away from the university for convenience. We also have upstairs neighbors who sometimes wake Katja up at weird hours. Since she's very good at waking me up, I'm always exhausted after a bad night, too. I'd like to be able to expect to sleep all night. I think I'd like apartment living more if we could soundproof the shared walls somehow. I like the utility effectiveness that can come with carefully designed apartments, but the shared walls are hard for me because their noise encroaches on our lives.

I have a pendulum on my desk that draws patterns in sand. I got it because work was kind enough to get me a standing desk, but the only place I can put it is in the corner right up against the light, which is motion controlled. One of my monitors now blocks the sensor, which means every 15 minutes or so the light turns off. This is not exactly conducive to a consistent workflow. I got the pendulum to offset this issue and it works very well unless I forget to tap it periodically, in which case I'm reminded when the light goes out. My coworkers are rather amused by this, I think.

We are having another feast later this month. This time I'll try to remember to post the menu and pictures. We're also planning to start our Sunday waffle tradition again once we've moved. I liked being able to just have any of our friends show

up and eat on Sundays, and I really enjoy making waffles. We'll do it around lunchtime so I have time to do my long run and have a little time to recover. I'd prefer to avoid inflicting my sweat-soaked self on anyone else right after a run.

Speaking of running, I have now completed three half marathons. I'm happy with that. They weren't fast, especially not the third one, but I got through them and it was fine. The third one was the best in terms of experience. My first half marathon was a struggle; I started too fast, went at someone else's pace for a while, and felt like I was struggling throughout, but I'd paid to go through a program (Nicole's No BS Run Club <https://www.lifelessbullshit.com/no-bs-run-club/>) and I was damn well going to finish it. That was followed by hip surgery, which was far from fun. I scheduled my second half marathon a year and a half after surgery and I finished it because I needed to prove to myself that I could, that I wasn't broken. The third one, run after tearing my calf muscle and a month of jury duty, really should have been miserable. I was out of shape and my calves cramped up badly starting around mile 8, but the course was gorgeous (Huntington Beach on the bike trail!), the volunteers were very nice, and they wrote messages on the path to keep us going. One of the last ones was "My mascara runs faster than you!" which made me laugh. The earlier ones were supportive and also funny, but that one stuck in my head. I'm signed up for a few more over the next several months, mostly local but one a little out of the way. I have discovered that I really like the smaller races more than the big ones. I'm training for a repeat of the one I did in February, since I'd like to do better on the hills ("California flat" apparently means that it is never actually completely flat), but the others are mostly smaller local races.

Running is becoming a habit. It isn't completely there, especially on nights when I don't get enough sleep, but it's

almost automatic now to wake up, get into my running gear, warm up, and go. It definitely cuts into my sleep, but if I wait until evening the likelihood that I'll actually run is pretty low. I'll run tonight, since I missed this morning's run due to multiple sleep interruptions last night, but this one is only half an hour so I should be able to talk myself into it.

I can't quite believe it's June. For the first time in years, for me, winter has not included any snow. The months are smearing together a little bit. I'm happy to be here, but I don't think I've quite adjusted to the lack of seasons. The year round produce is amazing, though!

Life in general is going pretty well. We've had some hiccups, of course, but we're trundling along fairly happily. I'm enjoying being in the pool more, both on my own and with Katja. I am going to have to teach her how to put sunscreen on my back, though, apparently, since I'm a little bit lobstered at the moment. Work is going well. I'm starting to make friends, though that is, of course a slow process, since despite being technically right on the line between introvert and extravert, I'm still somewhat shy.

I'm learning a lot right now, which partially explains the silence. I'm learning to be a better parent, learning to be Katja's advocate, and working on some internal personal challenges as well. I'm also playing more in the kitchen, experimenting rather than following a recipe, and I'm gaining quite a lot of confidence there. I feel like there's a lot going on but none of it is really fascinating to anyone else, which is fine. I just find it difficult to write when I don't feel like there's much to write about that isn't just rambling. I suppose I've gotten rather good at rambling over the years, though, so I should go with my strengths.

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# Thanksgiving evening

I'm sitting in a quiet apartment. Everyone else is asleep and the cat is purring, curled up next to my hip. It's a rare moment of peace in our busy little household and I am enjoying it.

Thanksgiving for us usually involves inviting anyone who doesn't have anywhere else to be. This year, we didn't feel like we could do that. We just moved here recently and we don't know very many people yet. We also don't have the house completely set up, which makes it more difficult. We decided to keep it small, just the three of us and my mom. She's vegan, so we adapted most of it to fit her. The turkey, cornbread, and pumpkin pie were not vegan, but the green beans, squash, stuffing that wasn't inside the bird, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce, and little wheat loaves were. We also had both vegan and non-vegan gravy. It was all excellent. We also have a ridiculous amount of food left over, but that's what Thanksgiving is for, right? We do have plans for all of it.

I thought settling into a new place would be harder, somehow. Reno was a difficult place for me to live in many ways. I felt like it didn't fit me. We have a lot of very dear friends we made while we lived there, but I always felt out of place, somehow, and I had begun to think that perhaps that was simply part of being an adult. I've been here for a couple of months now and, even though I still periodically get lost driving around, I feel more at home here than I think I ever did in Reno. I don't have close friends here, which is sometimes very hard, but the general feeling fits me better, I guess. We live in a very multicultural place. When we go for walks, we end up talking to people about random interesting things. When I go

running, I almost always get a comment or two of support from unexpected people. The CSA is year round and the person who works at the stand at the farmer's market is always very nice and chatty. We talk to the guy who sells eggs and Katja always gets an extra piece of apple or orange from one of the fruit stands. We go climbing twice a week and everyone has been very welcoming and supportive of a three-year-old going up walls. I love my job and I like the people there. I have a gym four minutes away, so if I get there early or I'm feeling like swimming, I have somewhere to go.

I know in some ways it isn't perfect, but I decided when we started talking about moving that, no matter where we ended up, I would work on seeing the best things first. I didn't like Reno very much by the end of the time we lived there. I was allergic to everything, I didn't like how dry it was, and I didn't feel like I had a place there, like I really fit. I decided to change how I saw the world because being miserable was not improving anything. So, yes, sometimes traffic is nasty. Sometimes the fact that our apartment sucks at airflow unless we turn on the air conditioner can be frustrating. There are little things that I see on a daily basis and I acknowledge them. I am not being a Pollyanna. I have just decided that, since we'll be here at least five years and possibly many more and I want to be happy, I will accept that some small things will be a pain but I will focus on the positive aspects.

This weekend we're going to go visit an animal shelter to see if we can volunteer. We found a little local bookstore that we love. We have plants growing on our deck. We eat at the table on the deck quite regularly and it's very nice to chat with people as they go by below us. We have fresh, good food every week and easy access to a grocery store for anything else we need. Our kitchen is much better than the last one. Everyone seems to be doing well at school and work. We found a local children's theater that looks interesting. There's a lot of

live music of a wide variety of styles that shows up within half an hour or so of where we live. We have family here, a little distant but not too far, and it's very nice to see them regularly. I'm also going to check out a running group soon, since I've never really run with anyone before.

I'm glad we're here. I miss people we've known for years and I really hope we can keep in touch; I'm working on it. I haven't made new friends yet, but I remind myself that it took a while to make friends in Reno, too. I have a few acquaintances who may become friends at some point, so there's hope there. Overall, I think this is a good move for all of us.

I'm feeling very thankful today. Not to a god or higher power, but to our friends and family who have been part of our lives for years. Xander and I have been together for ten years and married for eight, and in that time we have been lucky enough to get to know some truly amazing people. We're in a new place now and I'm happy to be here. I feel like I fit a little better into the culture here, though I may be imagining it. It feels more open, more comfortable. Perhaps it's simply that I don't feel like I'm fighting my way through every day. I like going to work; I like coming home. I think that may be pretty close to my definition of perfection.

I hope anyone reading this has spent the day with people you love and good food.

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## Fragile quiet

Ever since I started running, I've gotten up earlier than the rest of my family. I like running in the mornings, especially since I don't have the time to talk myself out of it as I do when I run in the evenings. Midday just doesn't work for me. I



sweat a lot and I don't have access to a shower most days. I will run midday if it's the only time I can, but I'd prefer to run before the sun comes up.

Rest days are a conundrum. Do I allow myself to sleep in, setting myself up for irritation when the dog wants to go out at her normal time? Do I get up early anyway and feel a little bit like a martyr, getting up when I don't really need to? Do I split the difference? I've tried all three of these, but now that I've started meditating in the mornings, I need that time even if it isn't a day I exercise.

Meditation, as I've mentioned, is difficult for me. If our almost-three-year-old is awake, it's almost impossible. Even if Xander is taking care of her, letting go of thoughts becomes much more difficult when I'm listening to make sure he couldn't use my backup or listening to her push his buttons in quick succession, just as she does with me sometimes. If I wait until later in the morning to try to meditate, it doesn't happen. Getting up before everyone else seems a small price for being able to quiet my mind, even if it's only for fifteen minutes a day.

I don't get sunshine to help me wake up first thing in the morning, but I drive east every morning so there's no question about whether I get a dose of sunlight. I'm back to walking at breaks and lunch at work now, so that should help with my state of mind, too. My stress levels are slowly easing back down to something manageable. I'm working on being more present, putting my phone away when I'm with my family, and not trying to multi-task, since it doesn't seem to work well anyway. I'm better when I'm focused on one thing. I can enjoy it more fully, too, when I can completely engage with what I'm doing.

If it helps my overall well-being and sense of self, I'm willing to adjust my sleep schedule.

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# Danger

I was raised knowing that the world was a terrifying place. I knew that almost everyone was out to get me. I knew that, if I didn't stay on guard, someone would hurt me. I was trained to handle such an eventuality. I could deal with almost any violent situation from a ridiculously young age.

Eventually I realized that the world I actually lived in was not as terrifying or dangerous as I was told. I learned that a lot of people in the world were interesting and many of them were good people. I learned that the way I approached a situation often changed the outcome; if I went in assuming that people were going to be hostile and make me uncomfortable, I would get that reaction, but if I went in expecting kindness or, even better, not expecting anything one way or another, people would generally treat me well.

As an aside, I do understand that much of this is because I'm short, white, and female. I'm not seen as a threatening person, and that's just fine with me. I don't want or need to be threatening and it does not improve my world if people perceive me as a scary person. In high school a few of my friends and I experimented with how differently store owners and workers responded to us based on race, so I am very aware that I am speaking from a place of white privilege. That isn't really what this post is about, though, so I will let that be for now.

While the world certainly contains violence, at this point in my life I do not have to face it on a daily basis. While I've been working on meditating, though, I've been paying attention to the thoughts that float through my head. Many of them are how I would react if people are unkind or violent towards me

or the people I love most. This surprised me. I thought I had mostly left the violence embedded in my upbringing behind, but apparently I still think about and react to fear-causing situations much more often than I realized. Part of the meditation work is noting what goes on in my brain while I am meditating, noticing what feelings are brought up by these thoughts, and then letting go before I get wrapped up in responding to them.

Letting go is rather difficult.

There are a lot of emotions wrapped up in responding to people hurting people I love. Predictably, I'm sure, since no one wants to see that. It has been years since anyone I care about has been hurt, though, and it still shows up multiple times in a fifteen minute period. I keep being tempted to think through the scenario, figure out the best way of handling it, and then let it go once I'm really worked up about a completely imaginary occurrence. I am working hard on letting go before working through it, though, and that has proved to be challenging.

I don't know very many people who were brought up believing the world was full of enemies, at least not in this country, in this time. I know that it is not uncommon in other parts of the world. I know many children are trained to fight and look for danger, to deal with it before it hurts them, to always watch the people around them to see if they have weapons, but it is an odd mindset where I live and in my social circles. When I'm very tired or very stressed, I slide back into that mindset and I watch people differently. When I am awake and alert, that fear is mostly not evident, but apparently some part of me still worries quite a lot about how to protect the people I love.

That would explain some of my stress. If, when I get tired and overwhelmed, I also start working hard on protecting myself despite the fact that the fear is of things that won't happen,

I can see how that would drain energy rather badly. My challenge now is to recognize those mental and emotional hamster wheels and figure out how to get off, to let go, and to accept that planning for the worst eventuality is not going to make my life any better.

I am a pacifist. My upbringing taught me very well how not to be a pacifist, though, and I would like to change those patterns so I can work in my current reality without constantly cranking up my fight-or-flight response. If something comes up, we'll deal with it, and, for me, that doesn't require violence. I just have to work on my automatic responses to stress. Hopefully I will learn to let go without engaging.

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## Moving!

We have quite a lot of boxes at the moment. We're driving down to the new apartment on Saturday. It's going to be a huge change for all of us, but I think it will be very positive overall.

Xander will be starting his PhD program. Katja is starting a new preschool. That is somewhat bittersweet, since she will miss her friends and teachers who have known her since she was quite small. She really enjoyed her visit to the new preschool, though, so hopefully she will settle in easily. I have a job lined up and I'm very happy with it.

There are year round farmer's markets, which, after years of the short growing season in the desert, excites me more than it probably should. We'll be living half a mile from one of them. I am considering joining a running group, possibly starting rock climbing for cross training again, and we get to

explore new hiking trails.

I will miss a lot of people in Reno. We've made some very dear friends here over the years. On the other hand, we'll be closer to some family, we have friends about an hour away, and it's a completely different environment in many ways. Katja will get to learn to swim, we get to start growing herbs on our patio, I will hopefully not be allergic to everything that grows there (well, at least for the first year or two), and the neighborhood is very, very quiet. This last point is important because we have a neighborhood dog that barks all night and fairly regularly wakes Katja up. When that happens, everyone gets woken up. That does not improve the next day at all.

I am taking a little bit of time off from running because my hip is not particularly amused by the fact that I've been packing and moving boxes a lot since last week. Almost everything is packed and organized. Over the next few days we will get to see several family members we don't get to see very often, do a lot of driving, move a lot of boxes into and out of trucks, and probably not get enough sleep, but it's the beginning of a big change for our little family and I'm very excited to begin our new journey.

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## [A little bit of an old home](#)

I went on a trip this week and my change of planes was in San Francisco. I was on relatively small planes (still commercial, but one held maybe 30 people) so I walked the tarmac to get into the terminal and then again to get out to the next plane instead of going straight from the plane into an enclosed tunnel.

When I got off the plane and took a deep breath, I smiled. Completely unselfconsciously, I lifted my face to the wind and breathed in the air with an edge of brine to it.

I grew up by the bay and I also spent a few weeks every summer near the beach in Southern California. I love the smell of the ocean. Spending those few minutes breathing the air I grew up with, tasting the salt and enjoying the wind, was surprisingly relaxing. Lately, relaxation has been something I have had to focus on. That travel day, between getting to breathe such familiar air and spending almost five hours straight reading a book, relaxed me more than I had any reason to expect.

Travel is not generally relaxing. There are timetables, pressure changes, people who wear too much perfume, and the general feeling of being overwhelmed by too many people. This time, though, was different. The planes were on time. I didn't have any schedules I had to meet on the other end, just a night in a hotel room before an interview. My hip didn't object to the pressure changes. No one wore too much perfume. Someone made the mistake of eating sauerkraut on the second flight, which almost caused several people to be sick, but that dissipated fairly quickly. I like sauerkraut, but that smell in a small, enclosed space with that many people was a seriously bad idea. I got off the plane in San Francisco, checked the boards for where the next flight would be, turned around, and walked back to the gate I had just left. I can't remember ever having that happen before. All of the pieces just seemed to fall into place for once and it was a pleasant several hour long stretch of reading a good book and actually being able to relax.

I won't be stopping in San Francisco on the way back, unfortunately, but I will be able to curl up with a good book and not worry about anything for a while. No lists, no stress, no packing or scheduling or making sure everything is done. All I need to do is get on a couple of planes on time. I can do that. In a week we'll be packing the trucks and Xander and

Katja will be moving, but for a day I will not be thinking about that. I'll just be curled up either on an airplane or on a seat in an airport losing myself in the enjoyment of an interesting book. It will be easier because I got to breathe San Francisco air, however briefly; I spent a lot of my childhood curled up with books, too, and I was quite good at letting go of everything else while I was reading. I'm going to enjoy practicing that skill on the way home.

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## Meditation

I'm under just a little bit of stress right now, to say the least. Job hunting, packing, a few large projects at work, and staying on top of normal life is not working well for me right now. My allergies decided to flare up (I can't wait to move because I'll have a break from allergies for a while!) and my doctor, in addition to a few other ideas, told me that I need to meditate.

Holding still and not thinking are far from my strong suits. I like moving, being busy, and my brain is always going. Since the nonstop brain activity is the problem, I'm now supposed to hold still and let my brain empty out.

Meditation is much harder than it sounds like it ought to be.

I cannot sit with my legs crossed for very long yet due to my hip still getting a bit achy at times. I can sit against a wall or I can lie down to meditate. A friend of ours also mentioned walking meditation, which I will be trying soon. I have mostly just been working on the traditional "hold still and focus on your breathing" version and I'm finding that quite challenging.

My perception of meditation is probably part of the issue here. I think of it as actually making your mind be peaceful, having nothing in your head, and letting go of everything, a state of deep peace and stillness. I am learning that it is more about acceptance of what is, a state of thoughtless awareness, which is a phrase I'm still working on understanding.

I am learning to accept my brain's constant jumping from one subject to another when I don't have a specific focus. I've tried holding an image in my head, such as a word or a shape, and that helps a little, but I constantly have to refocus. If I don't have a focal point, I end up on tangents and start thinking hard about all aspects of some problem I'm working through. I understand that using a focal point is not ideal, but I think it's where I have to start.

I sit or lie down. I think about all of my muscle groups in turn and try to relax them. This is not just for relaxation but also because it gives me a pattern to begin. I always do this, so it prepares me for meditating and makes it a little easier to let go of the world. It's rather like my warm up exercises before running. I know that once I start warming up I'm going to be running soon, so my focus shifts to running-related thoughts rather than all of the normal flotsam and jetsam in my head. Relaxing muscle groups triggers me to start letting go, at least a little bit, of everything that has happened that day.

Once I have relaxed everything, I let my mind drift. This is where I'm struggling most. If I just let my brain run, I end up thinking of something, seizing it, and then working on it while I'm supposed to be meditating. I am learning to let thoughts slide through my brain without catching my attention, though that's not easy. The same friend mentioned above described meditation as having to pull back your attention over and over from getting tangled up in specific thoughts. She sat at the kitchen table and said "I start by having a



focus at the end of my nose” and mimed a clown nose on the end of her nose. “Then I do this...” and she sat still for a moment, then her eyes wandered, she grabbed at the air to her left and put the nose back on. Another few moments of stillness, then somewhere down by her foot got grabbed and replaced. It made me laugh. It also made me feel better about not being able to keep my brain empty; clearly I’m not the only one for whom this is a challenge.

I was also getting frustrated with muscle aches, itching, and fidgeting. I felt like I should be able to overlook these things, but I get distracted by them and then focused on them and then I lose any semblance of a calm, empty mind. Accepting what is my reality right now makes that a little better. Yes, I have an itch. Scratching it won’t kill the meditation; it’s just another place my attention drifts, another reason to bring it back again. It’s okay to not be able to hold peacefulness for very long.

This challenge has been difficult for me, but I am still working on it. I’m listening to people who are capable of meditation but also pragmatic about it. This is a way to calm down my brain and make life easier for me in the long run. It requires practice, like any new discipline. I can still work at it and I think, over time, it will help.

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## [What’s the worst thing that can happen?](#)

There’s a movie called Butter which came out in 2011. I really love the movie. There is one scene that stuck with me and that I’ve been thinking about a lot lately. Ethan is talking to

Destiny about how to handle something she's afraid of.

Ethan: Do you want me to go in with you? Don't tell Jill. She always likes me to think positive. What I like to do is this. I imagine all the bad things that could possibly happen if you enter this contest, like you could die... of a tragic butter overdose. There could be a rabid grizzly bear hiding inside this very Moose Lodge waiting to tear your face off.

Destiny: There could be a python inside.

Ethan: What if this place is full of monkeys with a deadly virus?

Destiny: There could be the ghost of Hitler.

Ethan: What if there's no gravity in there and you float up and bang your head on the ceiling? And then all the sudden gravity kicks in and then you bang your head on the floor?

Destiny: There could be a black hole and it'd suck me all up.

Ethan: Yes! What if this place is full of good looking British vampires?

Destiny: The worst of all of them.

Ethan: They're so pale!

Destiny: Or hungry cannibals.

Ethan: It could happen. Or there could be a mass murderer who only kills adorable little girls. Think about it.

Destiny: Or racist ninjas.

Ethan: (laughs) Racist ninjas. Good one. Yes. High five. That was a good one. So, think about all that and ask yourself, really, what's the worst thing that could happen?

Destiny: I could be terrible and lose.

Ethan: Yeah. Yeah. Could you live with that?

Destiny: I guess so.

Ethan: Ok then. It's really not such a big deal, is it? Go make us proud. Bring me back some butter.

I'm in the process of applying for jobs. It's not my favorite thing to do. I had an interview today, though, and it went a little more easily for me than past interviews. I was not as worried as I have been for earlier interviews. Part of the

reason is that I'm working very hard to focus on the worst thing that can happen, which sounds somewhat counterproductive.

The worst thing that can happen is that they can say they don't want to bring me in for another interview. I might not be able to move when my family does, in which case I'd stay here and hang out with the dog and the cat. If that happens, I will definitely miss Xander and Katja. I really enjoy their company. I love who we are as a family, how we play off each other and get silly. We're good together.

On the other hand, the last few months have been ridiculously stressful. Setting up a place to live from several hundred miles away, making sure Katja gets into the preschool we want her in, and trying to find a job have taken a toll. I am tired. Everything else is sorted out except for my new job, which leaves me feeling like I'm somehow not enough. Once we have an address there, job hunting may get easier, but in the meantime it's difficult. The thought of having the house to myself, just being responsible for myself and two animals, sounds quite peaceful. I know it will make Xander's life a bit more stressful for a while, which is unfortunate, but being on my own for a few weeks would not be terrible for me.

So the worst that could happen is that they could say no, Xander and Katja would move ahead of me, and I'd have some down time with limited stress. I would like the job. I think I'd be good at it. If they say no, though, it isn't a really big deal. I'll move on to the next one and something will work out eventually.

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# Packing

We're moving, or at least most of us are moving, in a month. We've gotten a fair amount of packing done but I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed, partly because there are still a few things, important things, that are not yet settled.

We have a place to live there. It's a nice place, they have no problem with our rather large dog, and we will have access to a pool. All of those things make me very happy. It's walking distance from a mall, which, in general, would not make a difference one way or another, but in this case it's pretty neat; there's a year round (!) farmer's market and a movie theater, both of which are likely to get our business. Katja is almost old enough to enjoy going to the movies and we have always enjoyed it, so we're looking forward to sharing that with her. I think we will be happy there.

In about two weeks we'll know whether or not I get to move when they do. I'll either have a job lined up by then or not. If not, the dog and the cat and I will stick around in Reno until I find work there. It isn't a huge deal, but it will be rather irritating. We can handle it. Xander is more than capable of taking excellent care of Katja, of course. We'll all be fine. I'll just miss them quite a lot if that happens. It will eventually work out. It's hard for me to not know for the next two weeks whether or not I should pack up everything, though.

I'm handling this the way I handle many stressful situations. I'm making lists. Today I started a list of the items that would need to stay with me if I don't move when they do. It's actually not a very long list. I don't need much. Clothes, toiletries, some kitchen stuff, somewhere to sleep, and my favorite electronic devices. My phone is now a wireless hotspot, so the internet connection for the house can be shut down. If I decide I need to watch a silly movie, I can rent

one and play it on my computer. I have e-books to read. I can simplify everything for a little while and just focus on getting a job and getting a lot of sleep.

In the meantime, I'm packing. We have 69 boxes packed so far. Many of them, unsurprisingly, are books, but at least they are all in relatively small boxes. We won't be moving most of our furniture. Bookcases will come with us, but the dining room table won't work in the new place, we're looking at a different idea for the dresser in our room, and Katja's room will be more colorful. We still have some packing work to do, but some of it, like much of the kitchen, will have to wait until we are about a week out from moving. We use the kitchen a lot and love to cook, so it's hard to pack up very much of it right now.

I'm looking forward to starting over somewhere new. There is a certain amount of worry because we'll be in a new place with new people and we will have to find out where we fit, but I think it will go well. I like the climate there despite the drought. We will be closer to some of our family and friends. I'm feeling stressed because, despite everything else coming through, a new job for me is still in question.

I suppose that means I should get back to boxes and lists. They make this real and give me a way to get a handle on a big change.