

Warning: Moving nasty

Boxing up his life, **Lee Suckling** puts love on the line with *The Big Move*.

It's supposed to be one of the most exciting things in life. No more flatmates. No more walks of shame. No more toast and Marmite for dinner. Moving in with someone for the first time heralds a new stage in adulthood.

However, frequently cited as one of the most stressful things in life (behind death and divorce), moving isn't the picnic it ought to be. In fact, packing up boxes and lugging mattresses across town is only slightly less harrowing than a marital separation. Now, I've never been through a divorce. But I can now say, from first-hand experience, moving house is so traumatic it should come with an explicit warning from the Ministry of Health akin to that on cigarette packets. **Warning: Moving Kills.**

Moving in together is the first real relationship test. When you're dating – seeing each other a few times a week and most weekends – it's easy to hide your crazy. No-one ever has to know how screwed up you really are. But when you live together, you can't conceal your insecurities for long. You're forced to reveal everything that's wrong about you. This usually happens mid-meltdown over a broken lamp or malfunctioning internet router.

For my boyfriend and I, the decision to live together was an easy one. We are comfortable enough with each other's habits, both clean and dirty. We are both good at conversation, and equally as good at sitting without talking. And we can host a flawless dinner party without ever needing to ask the other what needs handling.

Weeks of planning went in to the big day. Professional movers were organised for the large items. A kilometre of bubble wrap was bought for the breakables. A trailer was rented and ready. And a storage unit was sorted for the excess.

Then came the rain. One miserable July New Zealand weekend, it poured cats and dogs.

The moving company did its job as expected. A few scratches on a tabletop, sure, and a lost sofa leg, but nothing too catastrophic (and the transit insurance was in place). Three trips across town between a storage unit and the new house ensued. It wasn't until we had spent a few hours in the new place, a 1920s cottage, when the boxes that housed our lives surrounded us, that the adrenaline of moving started to wear off and things started to go terribly wrong.

My boyfriend and I were tired, hungry, wet and cold. We couldn't figure out how to turn the hot water on, nor did the gas fire seem to work. We had no food, and even the corner dairy closed at 6.15pm (crazy, right?).

And the first of many stressful fiascos for the days to follow was about to begin.

As we took the boxes we didn't want to unpack to the basement, we discovered it wasn't watertight and the weekend's storm had caused it to flood. Darkness had fallen hours ago, and it was then we started to snap at each other.

We called it quits at 8pm after one last dash for an unhealthy dinner of burgers and hot chips. Both sets of our sheets had somehow gone missing, so we attempted to sleep, in the freezing cold, under just an uncovered duvet.

Awaking on a cold Monday morning, I called the landlord to sort out the hot water and gas, which he would do later that evening. The fire worked – it just appeared that both of us, kids of the 1980s, were too young to think of lighting a match.

As my boyfriend went to work, I took the day off to

receive the pre-organised deliveries and tradesmen, and set up our new home's administration. The new washing machine arrived on time, but the broadband technician never showed up. My Freeview-capable TV couldn't get reception without a dish, and the fridge we had bought on Trade Me was making a weird buzzing sound.

The day went on, and I discovered how few powerpoints there were in the house, and how damp the bathroom was with its lack of extractor fan.

By the time my boyfriend got home in the evening, I was frazzled and somewhat pissy. I picked a fight within half an hour.

I dropped work the next day once again, feeling too bogged down with moving admin to think about journalistic pursuits. I unravelled so much bubble wrap that day that I'd dream about it every night for the rest of the week.

Yet as my partner-in-crime arrived home from another day's work, it seemed we

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were still surrounded by as many boxes as we were days ago.

As I knocked a lamp off a shelf and it shattered to pieces, I had a silent breakdown whereby I didn't shout, scream, or cry – I simply sat on the floor, visibly emotionless, feeling lumped and overwhelmed on the inside. We both got angry, and it was then we had a mutual realisation. We can't hide our shortcomings any more.

Later in that moment it was realised why we were going through such hell. Because we had one eventual goal: to merely be together, and to be happy. So we pulled ourselves in, retracted our fangs, and got back to unpacking.

Over the subsequent days, things fell back in to place.

While the hard part is over, and we survived the first big relationship test, it's not all going to be smooth sailing. Now we have to learn the art of compromise.

He can't stand my mid-century chairs; I think his Regency versions are the stuff of old ladies. And God help me if he wants to put his taxidermy pheasant (no joke!) in the living room.

But I suppose none of that will kill me.



Illustration:
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