

Of Her Choosing: Susan Steggall

A news flash rolls across the screen below the twentieth episode of Series 6 of *The Good Fight* – a legal drama the woman has promised herself to watch to the end just as everyone is, hopefully, waiting for the end of lockdown. White words on a bright red band scroll across the bottom of the screen: ‘Lockdown ends next week!’

She stares out the window, beyond her garden to the scrubby bushland at the end of the street, which has been the limit of her world for so many months. She traces in her mind the well-worn path that marks the distance allowed for exercise. She thinks of the books she has been reading to pass the time: romances, adventures, mysteries. She hasn’t been bored – or lonely. Her children zoom in weekly; friends ring most days. Food deliveries are adequate. She looks around her comfortable living room, her gaze alighting on the new laptop her son has given her. She smiles at his words. ‘You have to be up-to-date Mum. Communication’s all digital now.’

‘Yes dear,’ she had replied. She is as up to date as she need be.

Another newsflash, full screen this time. The premier, health minister and several other dignitaries file onto a dais and gather around a microphone. She’s seen enough of them over the past two years. She turns off the set and heads out for her daily walk. The air seems clearer, the sunshine brighter, the aromas of plants lining the dirt track more enticing, birdsong more melodious. The trees beckon to her with their dancing finger-like leaves and graceful pale trunks. Tomorrow she will bring the new laptop and a campstool, much as artists take their equipment into the landscape, and record her heightened state of listening, seeing, feeling.

Freedom. What does it mean now that she will soon be free to go wherever she likes?

Will she venture further afield to parks, beaches and public gardens? She has come to enjoy this secluded patch of bush, to think of it as her own private world. It will take time, the woman thinks, to re-join the rushing world of supermarkets, busy streets and the raucous sounds of traffic. Does she even want to?