

# Roam



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0:00

**H**ints of anxiety, like heavy clouds closing in around my head, begin to manifest as I scroll aimlessly around the map. Just looking over all these wonderful places we've been, places that have grown to mean so much to us, that have played such a huge role in shaping us into the people we are today. It's overwhelming me – a crushing wave of memories. Could we really just uproot everything and leave all this behind?

I zoom right out to find our new place. It feels like a blank canvas in comparison, we haven't even begun to look into anything in the area. There's been so much else to do in these last few months, I've barely stopped to give this whole moving away thing a second thought.

One last weekend away before we go. It was a real toss up trying to choose between all the spots we've been. From our first (on-purpose) date walking and talking our way along the coast until the path ran out, to our first anniversary camping under the stars on the open country to the west, to just last month seeing the first snow fall as we hiked the highlands.

But I think we both knew it had to be the lake. Back to where it all began four years ago. The only real decision we had to make was between renting *that* cabin or camping in the van. However, when I'd checked online the cabin had already been booked out, so we didn't have to mull over that decision for very long.

The van it shall be.

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I think we both just want this to somehow be the perfect send-off. A neat little bow on this chapter of our lives.

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**0:26** The drive up in the van is mostly quiet, as we're both lost in thought. Two people thinking through the same thing at their own pace. *What if we hate it away from home? What about our families, our friends? Is this going to change us?*

"So... whatcha thinking 'bout?"

"Oh, you know. Just about packing up our lives and moving seventeen hours away from everyone we know and love..."

“How very dramatic. Do you not think we’ll be able to make new friends?”

“I dunno... Where do you even look for friends when you’re an adult? The supermarket?”

“Hah, maybe the dog park? We’ll have to buy a dog first though.”

“Hey, nice try. You know I’m allergic – do you really want me to be snotty and sneezing for all of eternity?”

“If it means we can get a Border Collie... then maybe.”

“Um, rude!”

We finally turn off the highway and begin winding our way up the mountain. The CD we were listening to, one from Rory’s stash, sang its final melody and abruptly ended. All that’s left is the sound of wheels on asphalt as we weave between the tall gums towards our destination.

“What should we listen to now?”

“Well, you know what I’m thinking.”

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**1:03** A few years ago, we’d come across an old four track tape recorder amongst Rory’s things at the beach house. After a bit of TLC and a lot of online tutorial videos, we finally got it functioning again.

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We'd been playing music together ever since the beginning. Nothing too complex, just feeling our way around various melodies and harmonies, letting our instruments interweave and combine until we discovered something fresh.

After a while we grew to have a deeper understanding of each other's playing styles – so that with just a glance or a subtle movement we could guide each other effortlessly through one idea to the next.

By the time we'd found and fixed up the tape recorder, we had already composed a few pieces that we were really enjoying playing together. So one summer's day at the shack (where we'd recently acquired an old upright piano, still vaguely in tune), in the dusty living room with the waves crashing in the distance, we propped up the microphone in between the two of us and just hit record.

The songs were mostly gentle, yet playful, as one instrument called and the other came to answer. Yet in some parts the piano recklessly clattered from chord to chord, while the guitar rattled alongside, desperately trying to keep up. At these points, the tape was overdriven and crunchy, matching the energy of the performance.

The final song, though, was (is) our favourite – a slow piece with a gentle repeating motif, piano and guitar rising and falling in perfect step, with each passing moment giving rise to a new, unexpected harmony.

That tape is starting to wear now - it hasn't left the van for years. As I press play for the thousandth time I am taken back to that summer's night, rushing outside into the moonlight, so excited to listen to *our* tape. We were sitting in the van, looking out through the foggy windscreen at the stars spread out endlessly over the vast ocean. You could feel it then, something ephemeral, hidden behind the mellow textures woven by the guitar and the piano. And even now, through the warbles and crackles, you can still feel that spark - fresh as the day we hit record.

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**2:06** We drive slowly through the quiet town until we see it – the little cabin tucked away amongst the trees, unbothered by the passage of time and unfazed by the comings and goings of the world surrounding it. *I wonder if anyone else has played the piano in there since? Or is it once again sitting dormant, gathering dust?*

We keep driving until we arrive at the campground. It is well into the afternoon but luckily there are no other campers there, so we had our pick of the spots. With the car engine off, our ears adjust to the sweet sound of silence seeping in through the van windows, only briefly interrupted by the first few birds assembling for the evening chorus. I think we both want to savour this feeling for as long as possible, but we still have to make our way to *that* picnic spot before it gets too late, so we reluctantly unbuckle, load the packs, and head off along the forest path.

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We approach the fallen tree, where the path ends and we have to head through the bush to the left to reach the clearing. But just as we were about to step off the path, something flickered in the corner of my eye. I turned and looked past the other end of the fallen tree.

“I think I saw something moving over there.”

“What was it. A kangaroo? Or something more... sinister?”

“Very funny. I’m serious though, there’s something back there, near the base of that big gum tree.”

“Well, we should check it out!”

“Are you sure? What if we don’t make it to the clearing in time?”

But I think we were both thinking the same thing at that point. We both grin.

“In the spirit of adventure then?”

“Let’s do it.”

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**3:10** Well, we may have made a mistake this time. The sun is starting to set and we’re still bush bashing. I really did just want this to be one last perfect little sunset picnic before we headed north.

I should probably be feeling flustered or stressed, having led us away from the known path, but right now I can’t wipe the smile from my face.

“I swear I saw something!”

*“We’re going on a bear hunt…”*

“Oh my god, stop! It was obviously not a bear.”

“A bunyip then? Mythical protector of the swamps!”

“Oh I get it, are you scared? Don’t worry my dear, I’ll protect you from the scary creatures of the night.”

“Um, how dare you. Remind me who is the one that needs the closet door all the way closed before they can fall asleep?”

“Well, what about that time when…”

Just at that moment, we both saw it. A clearing off in the distance – and not a moment too soon! We stopped and caught each other’s eye for a second before we took off, racing side by side through the undergrowth, with the golden evening light beckoning us forward.

Bursting out from the tree line simultaneously, we are greeted by a field full of daisies, bathing tranquilly in the soft pink-orange glow of the setting sun. More beautiful than either of us ever could have imagined, it felt as though we had stumbled into a hand painted scene from an old Disney storybook.

**3:10** We collapse onto the ground, still laughing and covered in scratches from the mad dash to this magical new clearing.

Tracing the movement of the clouds across a sky  
alight with the rainbow gradient of the afterglow,  
the sun well below the tree line now, I can't help  
but remember the first time I came here. So much  
has changed since then – we're both such different  
people.

But in this moment, as I turn and look into your  
eyes I know that one thing hasn't changed, and I  
hope it never does.

**4:02**

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