

## **TOO MUCH JOY: YVONNE BEST**

*They are thinking of renting a loft room in a barn, on some acreage, on a winery?*

It was one of those stupendous moments of joy.

*And would I drive out there to meet the family?*

The 'loft' turned out to be the whole upper floor of the barn building, above the storage of traditional wooden wine barrels. It was a dream – with six dormer windows, three each side, overlooking a vineyard on one side and front gardens on the other.

My life had arrived.

The main house was a short distance away. That's where I'd need to go for the bathroom and kitchen.

Inside the house everyone sat around a large wood table. I remember the warm yellow glow of the evening. Two children were doing homework, a couple of older boys around my age. And I think 3-4 older adults – an uncle, aunt, maybe a grandparent, and the noble lady.

Atop the table was a communal wine vessel, shaped like a small half-barrel with a large handle. The adults passed the barrel around, taking turns at sips between chatter, homework, and books.

I was excited, euphoric. We enjoyed a light supper of pasta and the communal cup kept up the rounds. I was in love. The children were sent off to bed.

Someone pulled out a joint. I was surprised, but not wholly inexperienced. It seemed a token of acceptance. Within a half-hour the room started to spin, and I started to feel the upwelling of red wine and pasta.

My higher brain rationalised my situation. Once inside their bathroom, my now panicked brain said I could nip outside via the window, quickly evacuate my stomach contents, climb back in, tidy up, return to my hosts, grab my bag, excuse myself, head home.

It was a good plan.

Unfortunately, my wriggling leg kicked over a large pottery planter on the way out the window. The noise was earth-shattering.

I was out the window and, on the ground, staggering about 20 metres across the garden to rid my body of its pressing business.

The smash alarmed the adults inside. The 'are you alright' calls to the toilet went unanswered. Because I wasn't there.

Minutes passed. Adults swarmed out the house, looking for me.

*Who the hell climbs out of a toilet window my brained screamed, demanding answers.*

They found me and were kind. I didn't get the rental.