

Tips

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Disclaimer

Any resemblance between the people and the occurrences, past or present, in this book, to any people or places, past or present, is a statistical certainty.

Or would be if the setting was in this universe. But it isn't. It's in a parallel universe that closely resembles this one. Mostly the same, but over there, the names are all different.

INTRODUCTION

Well, the title, *Tips*.

The word has an interesting variety of meanings:

Tips = shared information, good advice, insider trading.

Departure from the vertical.

The one tenth of icebergs visible above the waterline.

The pointy end of a weapon.

Growing end of a branch.

A facility where waste is deposited for recycling.

A gratuity left at the table for satisfactory service.

And, admittedly not in every day use, in bookbinding, to tip is to attach a single page to a blank page with a thin line of paste down its inner margin inserting content that is not printed.

It's a perfect title for a book about right now. Early 21st century. Now is about all of those things. *Tips*, this book, is about all those things.

And there is Will.

1.

Will is getting on.

His energy has retreated rather than expired, but he *is* getting old.

His descriptions of the distinction between truth and habit are still perfectly clear, but to most, what is not understood seems not to matter, unless it excites fear.

He says what he thinks when he says anything at all.

Will likes alone. He gets cranky about distractions that disrupt horizons.

Alone is pleasant, productive.

An expanding space.

2.

Will's options have been reduced.

His vision is blurry.

He doesn't hear very well.

His joints won't take strain. He has lost physical strength. Suffers in the cold. Suffers in the heat. Sometimes suffers in between.

But not always, never always.

His eye brows have gone feral.

But his sense of irony, honed over time, stays sharp.

He admits, to himself, that his aches and pains have been largely self-inflicted.

Years of sculpture have grated each part of his body against another part in turn. When hardened to one activity, the work moves on and requires other sorts of excess, different combinations of muscle and bone.

His legs are strong. His sense of balance is good.

As physical activity claims less and less energy, his mind hunts.

3.

Will is relaxed in space. Spatial stuff has always been attractive: sculpture, structures, music, design, the environment. Or illusions of space: drawing, painting.

Words can also contain.

I think in words. Often dream in words.

Writing sounds like something I can do.

4.

Will ponders plots, three dimensional characters, emotional depth.

Considers comedy and drama. Thinks about insights, focused reflections of the human species. A path to the future.

What to package on pages?

Most challenging, **How to retain the tingle, the lightness, of life?**

He will seem naive to some, arrogant to others.

Some will think his conclusions are sour grapes because he has not succeeded after their fashion.

He prefers to avoid disapproval if he can. It warps meaning.

I have always celebrated life. Now I just need to spell it.

5.

I hope it works out, this writing. He needs to walk his mind.

6.

Will wants to get started somehow.

He decides on a font.

Optima 14.

Sounds like a sock size.

Modest, but a beginning.

7.

He reflects that he has no need for plot, drama, narrative.

He doesn't want to write a journal or autobiography.

The truth of fiction can be deeper, sharper than the facts.

He decides not to fix on an audience, to address no one, or perhaps everyone.

Perception is reduced through courting an audience.

Once in a great while, an individual functions successfully both ways.
Velasquez springs to mind, cosy in the Spanish court. Of all things.

I am not Velasquez.

Artists often tangle in the status quo, are neglected by the cultures that produce them. Persecuted, if the situation is despotic.

Will is grateful for peace.

In return, he will offer what he knows. Avoid artifice altogether, ignore recommended approaches. Plain English.

Keep everything as simple as possible.

This is not about dreaming.

One character. One possible person.

Reference to others as required.

He will not deal with basic functions: eating, drinking, sex or bowel movements.

Though he has wondered why the universal need to clean your bum is never talked about. There must be a best practice. Advantages handed down in families, through cultures. Millions of recipe books, but the final results are never mentioned.

Will has a series of traits that are male. He also has some which are female.

Not worth the toss. I know more about being male than about being female. Still not worth the toss.

Daily exercise, chi gong, motorcycle riding keep Will vertical. Writing will provide another axis.

8.

He is finishing the routine walk down to Michael's gate and back.

It will always be Michael's gate, Will supposes, though Mike is in the process of selling up and moving to Tasmania to begin life with his new pre-loved love, Doris.

This marriage is the culmination of a process that began three years ago when Will helped Mike join a dating site for over fifties. Until then, Mike had done very well without the web, thank you very much. Then, he became very occupied.

The walk is down a sandy lane edged with eucalypts and wattles, tea tree, chocolate lilies. A pothole or two.

As the sun tops the ridge, Will walks through three lots of carolling magpies. Variations on a windless morning.

Shuts his eyes to hear the distribution of distant birds. Peeks to keep his bearings.

Cries of cockatoos from kilometres.

Kookaburras.

Corellas, gathering for communal feeding. Their screeches, built for distance, are deafening directly overhead.

Five kilometres to Michael's gate and back. The drive crunches as he finishes for coffee.

9.

In the beginning, Sam(antha) and Will were alone in the Range.

The early 1970's. After ten years, they were neighboured by Michael and Ruby who settled a few kilometres down the road on a farm property. M. and R. built a house, raised a family, and, family grown, celebrated with a divorce. Ruby left, leaving Michel with his sheep, which he found inadequate.

Apart from losing the known quantity of their oldest neighbour, a good person, Will and Sam(antha) are somewhat nervous.

Mike is selling his property in four lots, none of which are big enough for traditional agricultural pursuits. There may be four houses where there was one. Four families, more pressure on this marginal landscape. `

They might be residential properties, or, worse, hobby farms. Since Sam(antha) and Will arrived, the number of dwellings in and around the Range has grown from one to seventy-four. The bush diminished every year.

The plague approaches.

10.

He and Sam(antha) live amongst trees.

Kangaroos.

Rock ferns.

Galahs.

Stumpy-tails.

Echidnas.

A scrap of Australia's ancient landscape.

Will and Sam(antha) have lived here for so long that they are no longer of any interest to local gossips despite the fact that they have never married.

So long that the ridge of the mountains across the valley is etched into Will's mind.

The comfort of many trees is normal.

A long time.

11.

Will has always liked solitude.

He is unconvinced that humans are only fulfilled around other humans. To him, that belief is a chip in chunky style, believing that the best of all possible worlds is peanut butter. [Very Voltaire.](#)

He has reservations about accumulations of people.

Nonetheless, he is grateful for infrastructure, wishes that there was less pressure on it.

Food, energy, fuel, communication, goods. All readily available. No pressure to turn the soil in the bush. No need to hunt or gather. Infrastructure indulges his freedom.

He isn't asked to maintain roads, police behaviour, defend property.

It gives him time to think.

Exposure to the urban hive numbs his mind. His blood surges at every loud noise.

Getting an education forced Will to abandon his 'I'd rather' for years.

Education and the need to earn.

He regrets that education is also used for conditioning—capture masquerading as bland.

12.

When he went to school, Will was exposed to explanations outside those favoured by his fundamentalist family.

Eventually he applied fundamentalist self-discipline to sort through all the crap, recent and acquired. For the self-discipline he was grateful, but admitted nothing else from that paralysed reality.

Will decided in his early teens to remain childless. His resolve cooled several relationships.

When he met Sam(antha), she thought it was a great idea.

Asked the big question, Will will offer one of several replies:

There too many people in the world,

If you have kids, they have to have shoes. Without kids, you can go barefoot, if need be. If you are independent, it's foolish to expect income from art.

It's an early choice, before it's too late, between art and a family,

Someone needs to care equally for all children. Easier if you have no vested interests,

I'm no genetic jackpot. The pool won't stagnate without my contribution.

13.

No surprise that the more Will thought, the more he could think.

He began to analyse events. Didn't take him long to discover that it wasn't news. The same script played over and over again with changing casts.

No point dealing with it daily. Or ever.

Profits of war and political manipulation are no secret. Corruption is no secret.

Will became a pacifist, though not in any form recognised by any government, except possibly the French.

Techniques of mind control are not secret. Will investigated.

Cultural expectations are ubiquitous and quite transparent once you look.

I'll decide for myself.

After all, even if I am completely wrong about everything every time, humanity won't falter from one failure. It is more likely to fall over because of its unchecked success.

14.

Will is not, and never was, politically correct.

Most issues are so silly that, despite documented injustices, he can't take them seriously.

Racism. Sexism. Patriotism. Religion. War. Distribution.

Oppression exists everywhere for all sorts of non-reasons. How could one not know? Mindless prejudices are universal.

It's too crazy to think about. Makes no sense from anywhere.

Others can excise injustice. Such nonsense will surely wither as education creeps across the planet. If we last that long.

He reminds himself that instruction produces both freedom and fanaticism, just as scarcity encourages both economy and theft.

A species leap ahead might see current injustices out, see them disallowed as murder is disallowed. Won't hold my breath.

Will is pre-occupied with other problems. Causes beyond symptoms.

15.

He is erecting plant guards up slope behind his studio. Been on his list for ever.

Grasses need protection to set seed heads. *Overgrazing is overgrazing even when by kangaroos.*

Once upon a time (well, before Europeans), kangaroo populations were controlled by the availability of water and food. Once upon a time, there was little permanent water anywhere.

Now there is stored water everywhere. Bush has been replaced by pasture. Under these ideal conditions, female 'roos can have a joey at heel, another in the pouch, and yet another developing in utero. Their ancient resilience can produce blown out populations quickly.

Will thinks the government should commission half a dozen accomplished chefs to produce a Kangaroo Cookbook.

Odds are it would be called *Kangaroo Kookbook.*

Few eat the meat. Mostly pets. But its very healthy lean meat produced by an animal that does not punish the country as sheep and cattle do. The problem is that sheep and cattle husbandry goes back a few thousand years and these new people have no experience of kangaroo and wallaby.

Will considers the last two hundred years or so.

Colonists clung, and their descendants still cling, centuries later, to their mother culture despite its ill fit on this different land.

They practise European husbandry on European animals. Meals are European preparation of European ingredients. Or Asian. Or Indian. Grandma's favourite recipe.

Blinkered to the existing realities of the land and its existing people. A vast body of knowledge and know-how squandered as Aboriginal lands were overrun by settlers.

Bush knowledge so completely dismissed, that of all the seeds, fruits, herbs, tubers and animals eaten by the Aborigines, only macadamia nuts became accepted as real tucker by white fellas.

Hard sharp many-hooves of stock send the soils into the wind.

Pesticides, fertilisers still drain into waterways.

Four seasons 'stick-on' time is retained where no two annual cycles are the same.

Unswerving property lines dissect land geologically subdivided over millennia into stable ecosystems with no straight lines in sight.

Luckily, Sam(antha) and Will's place contains its own catchment.

A few hours secures the netting. After a bit of time and a bit of rain, there will be seed heads. Will stretches his back and looks forward.

16.

Images of elderly Sicilian men, sitting relaxed in the sun on simple wooden chairs tilted against whitewashed walls, are embossed into Will's mind.

Old men relaxed in full sunshine, lined faces serene above black coats, shadowed by dark fedoras.

He has no idea when the images took hold. They seem always to have been with him. Perhaps his childhood enthusiasm for the National Geographic magazines lying around in waiting rooms and libraries.

Do older Sicilian women prefer indoors or are they confined by social mores? Or, do they work until they drop? Will doesn't know, but there are no relaxed women in the Sicilian folio.

Those images have suffused his brain just now because he, too, is sitting relaxed in full sunshine.

The chair he occupies has been relegated to the veranda because it is frayed, has gone a weary faded non-colour. There are hanging threads.

It retains its place on the veranda because it keeps its comfort. Great place to read in the afternoon sun.

It's a warm quiet day.

A book, spine to the pale blue sky, is splayed across his chest.

Drowsy in the afternoon sun, soft breeze playing just above his skin, Will is suspended in sensation.

Legs limp. Breathing balmy air. A bird calls, an insect drones by, a kangaroo coughs.

There is no peace like this peace.

17.

Shattering racket of a chainsaw grows with every step. Will rounds a curve to see a blue ute jutting out onto the side of the road. The saw stops.

A man emerges from the brush at the side of the road carrying an armload of cut branches.

Good morning.

You shouldn't be collecting firewood along this roadside.

The man bristles, tells Will that he is allowed to gather wood anywhere along any roadside. "Woman at the shire office said I could."

Didn't you see the sign at the turnoff? Says clearly that you cannot take wood from this road.

"I'm doing you a favour. Cleaning up in case of fire."

Give me a break. You people seem to think any wood too small or too big to use in your stove won't burn in a bushfire.

The man continued back and forth between the segmented limb and his ute throwing cut lengths into the back.

"Who are you?," the cutter demanded. "You live around here?"

Yes, I live around here and have for forty-five years. Who are you?

"I don't have to tell you."

Yes, you do. You are required by law to give your name and address to anyone who asks. (Will thought he had read that somewhere.) So who are you?

The man gave a name and a street address from town.

You know that Australia has the worst record for extinction of native species in the world. Right now, you are part of the problem. You are removing habitat.

"Fucking tree hugger," the man muttered. He finished loading cut wood, getting angrier.

On top of that, you have just demolished a clump of lilies and stomped three flame heaths into the dirt.

"I have better things to do than talk to you." He threw his chainsaw and fuel container into the back.

Good, said Will.

"I won't be back here again."

Good, repeated Will.

The man wrenched his door open, piled in, started up, and stomped on the gas, spinning wheels carving two grooves in the sandy roadbed.

Will sighed. Tranquility quashed, he turned to walk.

Ruminating.

18.

Wood, the free and friendly fuel.

Another rural myth.

Reinforced by ignorance or indifference of country folk, local councils and the Rural Fire Force. A tale told most loudly by the purveyors of wood burning stoves.

Nonsense of course, ignoring the evidence, akin to the belief that smoking does not effect your health.

The cost of a wood burning stove, a chainsaw and maintenance, the cost of driving out and back, cutting, loading, splitting wood and keeping it dry, the time involved cleaning ashes—wood is not the most economic fuel available. Burning wood is five times more costly than burning gas. Even more in urban areas.

Not the cleanest fuel either. Still winter mornings the town huddles under a cloud of acrid creosote smoke with clear links to cancer, asthma and other breathing disorders. Stinks too.

It takes three medium trees per year to heat a house. That's a conservative estimate. It can be more with wood-fired hot water services. Or poor firewood.

Three trees times the number of wood stoves in town is a staggering purge of timber.

Getting firewood. Thought to be a manly activity.

As shooting kangaroos and wallabies for dog food had been a manly activity thirty years before.

19.

Bed time is a pain in the ass.

Will sighs, most of his life going to bed meant falling into bed and sleeping. Or having a cuddle and then sleeping.

His current sequence of activities is the result of research and development. He should be more grateful than he is. **It's for my own good. Science marching on.**

He would have been dead at least twice by now without medical intervention. If not dead, then tired and confused.

He is drug powered and protected. Needs to keep sort of fit.

Will plucks his hearing aids out. Opens the battery compartments to save energy and dry components. Inspects the silicone domes.

Places the aids at the back of the night table, left dome down, right dome up preventing the tiny batteries from rolling out of their brackets into fruitless search.

Marvels of miniaturisation, impressive capacity to capture sound and deliver it to the inner ear. **Pain in the ass. Make my ears itch.**

He picks up the water reservoir for the breathing machine, takes it to the tap, supplies it, returns, slides it into its housing. In the closet, he reaches up to retrieve the hanging tube. Plugs it into the machine; snaky bit into boxy bit. The coupling controls air temperature, humidity. The box controls pressure, records everything.

Big Brother recording my sleep.

Will threads the hose beneath his reading pillow, flips the remaining length on top of the bed covers.

The breathing tube, terminating in nasal pillows, is a marvel of engineering.

He is comfortably turbo-charged all night.

Made of some accomodating silicone, the pillows fit intimately on the nostril's rims and feed air through shaped chambers reaching into the nasal space. A seal much superior to any of his long ago and far away diving masks.

Spectacles off next. Deposited behind the breathing machine.

Inhale a measured fog of drugs to open the nodules of the lungs. Wait three seconds and do it again.

Back to the bathroom to gargle.

'Brush-a, brush-a, New Ipana Toothpaste'. A jingle lurking in his brain since childhood. Commercial radio in the American southwest.

Will doesn't censure it because it reminds him with what ease conditioning happens and endures.

To bed. Read until drowsy. Fit the harness and nasal pillows for the night.

Read a bit more. Fall asleep to the murmur of the machine.

Will was grateful that his implanted teeth required no more attention than the real ones.

20.

Perhaps the wrong century. Or at the wrong latitude and longitude. Wrong home planet?

Will doesn't have an easy fit with now.

The times have no demand for his insights, little value for anyone's wisdom.

His aesthetic of natural forces lacks an audience.

There is little sympathy even for his determination to protect a patch of ground.

The future is problematic, things need to be considered which are not being considered.

Population is growing. The facts have been freely available for a long time.

It's not difficult to see decay, but few want to look beyond family, beliefs, home, neighbourhood, security—whatever that means.

Always the noise of war. Hunger. Ignorance. Unjust distribution of everything. Prejudice and intolerance.

Every one believes that God is on their side. All religions recommend love and respect. It must improve their aim.

Such a mess. Not a lot of sense in it.

Maybe born at the wrong altitude. Hatched at the wrong temperature—like crocodile eggs. Maybe born into the wrong culture.

No easy fit.

21.

The state of affairs sometimes depresses Will.

He knows what is happening, and not happening, in the world. Not knowing would be irresponsible as well as nearly impossible.

Violence, prejudice, greed, vested interests and other disasters are the same year after year.

No point dwelling on the gory details. Rather celebrate the day.

Will thought hard.

He trained not to believe or disbelieve anything. He looked. He listened. He avoided blockage. He read and read.

22.

Will's attention sometimes wanders during visits by friends.

Too many people over too short a time fuzz his focus. He's not accustomed to investing energy into people.

Friends need to be people that you can get over.

Visit once in awhile. Have enough of, and then, after some critical lack of contact, want to see again.

The trick to long-lasting friendships is to successfully judge the amount of time that you can tolerate company.

Separate before the habits, mannerisms, prejudices, personality defects, stress, or body odour begin to bite.

Separate when something waiting gets more interesting by the hour.

Solitude is critical to good relationships. A person needs space to exist.

23.

Soon Will will begin to write. He is thinking about writing.

24.

Life has led to a patch of bush. The patch of bush, in turn, has led Will to new domains of perception. Surrounded him with infinities of resolution.

There is a system of order out there more profound, more versatile, deeper, and much much more accomodating than any substitute invented by humans.

The corner stones of this perception lay outside the beliefs of Europeans, and thus outside their vision.

An appropriate sense of reality would go far towards solving problems caused by two centuries of ignorance and indifference.

Will widens focus.

He floats on detail to a farther level.

Assessments, re-assessments, self-assessments, pausing to test developing patterns. Turning around if necessary.

Will can imagine no space more compelling than the Australian landscape, precious because it is plainly indifferent.

This is a year of the yellow box. Every few years, many species of tree have extravagant blooming sessions. At the moment every mature yellow box is freckled with pale yellow blossom; the air is sweet, the aroma giddy.

Cockatoos notice too. They have gathered for a sugar feast. The ground is carpeted with discarded bits of blooming: twigs, leaves, blossom, scent.

Mobs of cockatoos are spectacular. Flickering, flying fireworks.

And galahs. Galahs must enjoy flight more than any other animal. They enjoy flight even more than seals enjoy swimming.

Will watches galahs mingle, watches them feeding, watches them talk to one another. They cheer him.

Humans are supposed to be smarter than cockatoos.

I hope that some of us are.

Grumpy Will.

25.

Not through his own volition, Will has been digging through slides all afternoon, looking for images taken over years of occupation.

Sam(antha) decided to make a photo-book about their tenure in the bush.

Will had taken a lot of photographs over the years: cycles of the weather, wet, dry, burnt, regenerating, blooming and withering.

Visual records of recovering habitats.

Looking at these slides, even quickly, absorbs him. The images record a developing ease between them and the remnant bush.

It is an exacting landscape.

Everything is granite. Boulders covered with lichen (until a hot bush fire scorched many back to basic pink). Granite sand.

Hard as a brick when desiccated; quicksand when saturated.

Photographs of returning life: waves of trees, rushes, clumps of flowering herbs, grassy patches.

Kangaroo, wallabies. A marching echidna. Koala in a tree. Lizards.

Five spaces that they have lived in one after another until the house was built.

Their separate studios.

Finally, he reached the end. None of the photos remaining in the cabinet were of the place. There are the slides stored in boxes. And finally there are printed photographs, and digital images. Getting it all together might take awhile.

Will was happy. He thought the book would be a great record, as well as the sort of thing he would never do.

Besides, looking at photos is an ideal way to spend a rainy afternoon.

26.

Will is black top to toe. Hat to shoe. Shadow among shadows.

Sam(antha), sitting next to him, is also dressed in black, though she is stylishly turned out. Attractive.

Will doesn't make fashionable.

They are at a funeral.

Ordinarily, Will stays well away from social rites and rituals.

Exaggerated language, unconvincing symbolism, silly hats. Weddings and funerals, graduations and openings. Awards. Christenings. Confirmations. All moments to avoid.

He is here because of Elizabeth and the two boys. Lives whipped off line by that accident. Paul, dead husband, deceased father. Will's Friend. An old friend, unable to be older.

Plain pine coffin. Paul had too much regard for materials to bury good hardwood. The coffin has a red rose and a green apple on its lid. Put there by Elizabeth. Paul's wishes? Elizabeth's gesture? Could be either. Or both.

Paul had been a consummate craftsman, durable intelligence, wry wit, accomplished musician, scholar, committed egalitarian.

Also tax dodger, over-confident driver, tedious expert, over-zealous parent, devotee of junk food, and completely repulsed by exercise. More 18th century than 21st.

Paul.

From the pulpit, the celebrant was describing a gleaming paragon, a saint-in-waiting who bore only ghostly resemblance to Paul's presence. **Perhaps that is the point.**

Will, drifts off. As he drifts off during the accountant's explanations of the finer points. As he drifts off during monologues of persuasion. During conversations about the obvious.

Recalling glasses of wine. Recalling Paul's voice explaining the development of ensemble and orchestral structure over the last several hundred years. Smiling at and half-convinced by Paul's contention that all of Western Culture could be accounted for by bad weather.

Re-hearing Paul's odd conviction that the octave grew directly out of human consciousness. Ignoring the people of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Australia and a whole lot more. A strange side-effect of focus.

Dinner was served. Will never got a chance to challenge the octave notion. It would have been an interesting conversation. Paul would have capitulated after a stout defence. **I would have learned something. Would have been an entertaining talk, a warm evening over a glass of wine.**

His mind drifts to a different culture that defines white as the colour of mourning.

He is brought back to the ceremony as it ends, when Sam(antha) rises from the pew rubbing against his leg, dimming the light through his eyelids.

Afterwards, he gave widowed Elizabeth a deep hug, *Call me anytime.*

He squatted before boys in shock, one face slightly above his head, the other slightly below, shared a long look with each. *Not easy, is it?* He shook their hands slowly, firmly. *I'll be around.*

27.

To facilitate writing was the excuse.

Will bought a new computer.

His first exposure to a computer was indirect. Bragging-right articles in the campus newspaper. On the news sometimes. Since, some have suggested that the university super-computer created Silicone Valley and the tech revolution.

In Will's student days, the university built a windowless brick bunker. Then built a single computer inside it. An enormous assembly of vacuum tubes, switches, shelves, fuses, drives and endless wiring plus cooling equipment and air filters. An environment of such delicacy that those who worked inside dressed in dust proof, anti-static gear. Entry was forbidden.

A very sober business.

Fifty years later, Will bought a new MacBook. Bronze-gold. Critics called it pink, but it was in fact bronze-gold.

The laptop weighted less than a brick of the historic building.

It had multiples of power and speed well beyond its fortified ancestor's capacities.

It amuses Will. This new machine verges on the frivolous.

He loves it.

Elegant use of materials. Long battery life. Nearly weightless. Legible in outdoor light. Simple. Efficient. Easier to use than quill or clay stylus. Easier than pen and paper. Easier than a typewriter.

The laptop is dedicated to writing. Not that the computer itself is restricted to word processing. The constraint is Will's decision. He has other computers to use for design, composition, photography, shopping, research, mail.

Will relishes this sleek machine's sole purpose.

Nothing on the screen apart from his text. Once more, writing is a vacant space with no menus, icons, symbols, or shortcuts cluttering the eye.

The width determined by a full-sized touch-typing keyboard. Though Will wonders whose full-size it was. Small beneath his paws. He will adjust.

Half a century ago or more, in high school, Will had taken a typing course elective. Brave. Shy adolescent. The rest of the class were females training for a career as whispering secretaries.

Will became a proficient typist. Turned out to be a durable skill. Possibly not for much longer. Voice to text software is almost seamless.

Touch typing will serve him nicely through his developing fiction.

The final glad tiding was that this new keyboard feels mechanical, un-switch-like. The keys have resistance, travel flat without tilting under the finger. **Just like one of the old bangers.**

Writing really is beyond pen and paper.

Simpler than a typewriter's return carriage, messy ribbons, difficult carbon copies, impossible corrections.

Serious editing functions.

Portable and self-contained, progress as real as recorded music, wi-fi books, films on demand anywhere, anytime.

The computer takes little space, is light and accomodating. Nowhere are the mechanics of writing on it awkward.

No more wasted paper.

It remains to be seen if the writing here will prove as durable as paper and ink.

Will suspects not, but for now, the computer flows with his mind. And he can always print it out.

28.

Progress. The notion of progress. Curious business.

Some things seem to get better.

Immediate information anywhere. Music of all time everywhere. Books, and books, and books. Special interests—from mountain bike reviews to the sounds of stars. Political developments from any point of view. For the isolated, on line shopping unclogs the slow flow of new products, gives access to developments that have not entered local habit.

But also things are worse. Progress seems to include better and better ways to kill more and more people from farther and farther away. Progression from heavy stick to flying drone. Surveillance becomes ubiquitous. Habit forming food that makes you fat and leaves you hungry. Continuously refined techniques for conditioning. Lessing senses of privacy. And a huge increase in superficial information.

Latest studies show: short attention spans, low judgement skills, loss of physical capacity (handwriting.etc), lack of exercise, loss of memory skills, loss of language's abundance, loss of math skills.

The young accept these limitations as normal. Will wonders what will astonish them in their maturity.

He hopes that younger people learn to balance their drives without violence.

29.

In his teens, Will got serious about freedom. The guaranteed right of every American. The red, white and blue, star-spangled absolute right of every American.

No heroes. No role models. No team sports. No cliques.

No gangs. No contests. No board games. No hobbies.

He was sceptical about consensus. Did his best to deflect social affectation.

He conformed closely enough in appearance to avoid friction. Too much trouble not to.

He was not so lucky in other areas of male teen-age culture.

He thought competitive sport was ridiculous. Inapplicable skills encouraged by hysterical enthusiasm.

He did not click with the automotive obsession, grease under his fingernails, the smell of hot rubber, the note of an acceptable exhaust system.

Endless discussion about the best combination of transmission and engine, the coolest mag wheels, the price of custom upholstery—none of it interested him.

He cringed at the bravado about women, the disclosures and exaggerations, the size of boobs, who let you put your hands where, who wanted it.

He resented having to listen to pop music sponsored by the student council during lunch times, recesses.

His attitudes did not make for an easy life, but he did not have to deny himself, regret his behaviour, absorb waste.

And it was more comfortable going it alone than playing with young male mores.

Predictably, he was the target of bullying. He took up judo.

One of his tormentors over a couple of years was a heavily built member of a street rod gang.

Usually, Will was able to talk his way out of physical confrontation. Not always.

Pushed beyond retreat into a corner of the shower room by a larger man, Will defended himself. He wasn't bullied again.

He endured school. There was a rare sparkle of interesting classes, excited teachers. Smart kids. Breathtaking girls.

He dreamed that university would be better. Only to discover in due course that it was the same, only smarter—which made it even less attractive.

30.

Middle aged life seems diaphanous from this distance.

Sustained hard work. Strategic retreats into academia when resources were depleted by the property, by the art.

Always returning to the land, continuing to work.

Will thought of employment as hitches in the army. Or maybe the scouts.

He would never be a comfortable academic.

Vows to keep a low profile didn't always work.

Will took up an appointment as head of a university design department. He lectured beginning students. Predictably, he taught university standard Principles of Visual Organisation to first year students.

The Dean of the Art School called Will into his office. He told Will to teach sign writing, which is what the students expected when they enrolled. **I'm sorry, but they were enrolled before my appointment.**

Will refused to comply on the grounds that *Sign writing is not a university level subject for god's sake.*

Shortly after this incident, the Dean walked into Will's first year design studio, telling Will, in front of his students, what he should be teaching and how he should teach it.

Will, enraged, bundled him out of the room.

Don't ever talk to me like that again. It is not acceptable to interrupt a class in session. Certainly not for your purposes. I am contracted to teach design in this university. I am capable. You can not insist that I lower my standards. I will not follow your direction. Your orders lack respect. I am the authority on design in this school. I've had enough. I have no confidence in your ability to lead this department. Leave me alone.

A strange situation.

It led to an art department which administered itself for a year and a half quite happily.

For a while, students accessed a staff made entirely of committed professional artists. Rarer than you might think.

Would have been great to be a student there and then.

The 'rebellion' was an affront to the university administration.

They could not cope with 'anarchy'.

As contracts expired, the dream staff were culled and disappeared, going their own ways as they had before. It could have been such a good school.

31.

Will is doing a rain dance in the privacy of his study.

He has his arms folded across his chest, his body is bent forward from the hips, knees bent, balanced on the front of his feet.

It has been raining for four days with slow deliberation. The very best kind of rain; gentle rain on parched ground. Soaks straight in.

I'm smiling.

Will reckons that the best way to avoid frustration by, or disappointment in, the efficacy of the rain dance is not to dance until it is definitely raining right now at this very moment.

That's when I feel like dancing.

Will is not sure his rain dance is orthodox enough to sway any known god, but he doesn't care.

He hums the rain and marks its rhythms, steps an alert walk of pleasure, the rug compressing beneath his toes.

Rain ought to be celebrated in this parched landscape.

32.

It's not happening today.

No next.

Just write anything?

Why not?

If it gets chucked in the bin, it doesn't matter. Spent much of my life doing jobs that don't show when they are done.

Will once spent seven months exterminating rabbits and killing weeds. Sunup to sundown week after week.

Lugging a fumigating machine up and down the hills. Or a spray pack loaded with herbicide.

At least the load gets lighter as the day goes on when you're spraying weeds.

He does none of those things anymore. Experience taught him that rabbit control is not possible on the ground. He eliminated rabbits three times.

But before new growth could establish, bunnies migrated in from surrounding land where they were not controlled.

Will has been invited to address an environmental guidelines committee.

Rabbit control baits are not specific, despite what the Department says.

Native animal species are killed, either by directly consuming baits (poisoned carrots are attractive to wallabies) or by consuming a poisoned carcass (raptors, etc).

Native animals are poisoned while sharing a fumigated warren. (Goannas, snakes, other reptiles, bandicoots...)

In the last few years, pressure on the land has been reduced by rabbit calicivirus. It won't last forever. Rabbits are good at immunity. And they breed like rabbits. Breed their way out of vulnerability.

Herbicides are bad news too. Persisting in sandy soil, they attack any plant, all amphibians. God knows how many insects, fungi, whatever.

In the beginning there was no choice. Weeds were so widespread that they defied control with overwhelming numbers. Eventually, after thirty years, weed numbers were down to the point where manual removal became viable.

Much less disruptive, but it still disturbs the ground which invites invasion by weed.

Will sighs, **The better you do this job, the less it shows.**

33.

Sam(antha), is visiting her sister in the city.

Sam(antha) has threatened to get t-shirts made while she's gone that have **"curmudgeon"** emblazoned front and back. Maybe down the sides as well. Says she will look for a light reflective feature. **Of course she won't.**

Will is spending a few days outside the patterns invariably set when two people live together for years.

He rode Scotty (BMW K1300RSE) into the mountains for a late breakfast among the tourists.

The small resort settlement features a cafe catering to the expectations of its urban coffee culture visitors.

He had poached eggs, steamed grains, capsicum, cheese on Middle Eastern bread. Read a bit from the Kindle that nestled neatly into his riding gear.

Back on the bike, Will headed for his daily run to the mountains.

Corner after corner, near floating, near flying. Clean, cold air. Bush smell. Little traffic.

A hum to begin the day.

34.

He sat down for a rest. Mid-afternoon. Hot.

Forced breaks, annoying to him since a child forced to abandon immediate intention to go to the loo. A clear fraying in the fabric of life, as far as Will was concerned.

One of the things God hadn't thought about properly.

But not taking a rest was likely to result in inconvenience too. As ignoring the call of nature had embarrassed him during childhood.

So he sat down on a log in the shade.

The comfortable seat encouraged him recall bush without logs.

So many termites in that country that fallen timber began to be consumed as soon as it hit the ground.

The absence of comfortable logs in the bush is inconvenient. His home bush is more comfortable, more domestic, prettier.

For the past couple of hours, Will has been picking up fallen debris.

Not because untidiness bothers him, but because fuel needed to be limited around the buildings. Coming summer and fire season.

Later, he would collect the piles to scatter on sparsely vegetated patches of ground farther out. Twigs, small limbs, dead leaves, bark were in short supply since the fires.

He doesn't take everything. Lizards, bugs, and birds around the buildings needed a bit of cover, some feeding ground. He wasn't as all inclusive as Summer Ready RFF (Rural Fire Force) recommendations. He left a little litter —under garden plants and beneath trees.

The house is made to resist fire.

Recovering in the shade, Will recalls RFF's behaviour during the two bush fires.

Both times, convoys of loaded water tanker units, extremely heavy, drove across decomposing sand. They seemed to have no idea that compaction will prevent re-growth, spread weeds, tempt erosion. Doesn't enter their heads that they are crushing the environment for no real reason. They don't have a clue about the bush.

Their sole focus is to extinguish fire. Never mind the increased fuel for the next fire. Ignorance with unlimited authority. Not ideal.

Will was pissed off all over again. He had reason. The RFF had invaded his bush twice now causing serious damage both times. Most of it can still be clearly seen.

They destroyed sandy slope habitats that had taken 35 years to re-establish themselves.

Ground-cover squeezed to dust.

He was getting worked up.

The Rural Fire Force is above criticism.

Unassailable heroes. Brave volunteers protecting the community at the risk of their own lives.

This land has been wounded twice now by the policy and practice of the RFF, has suffered from the indifference of the RFF to natural habitats.

The bush needs fire. Preferably at particular times and particular intensities. Not a good idea to burn when birds are breeding, when blossom is developing a new generation of seed.

Most of the time people ignore the certainty of fire. Fire prone buildings are everywhere. Begging to be burnt. Gives the RFF a chance to save the day.

OK, that's cynical. But their heroic standing does not reflect their behaviour in the bush.

If bush gets compromised through their efforts, that is just acceptable collateral damage. They tear places up that they should not, and need not, go near.

Give people a break, from less exciting days, with shiny red trucks, with powerful equipment, flashing lights, the world's sexiest braces and unlimited access. Serving the community. It goes to their heads. Military command structures are not ideal for approaching the nature of the Australian bush. It's not an enemy.

It's their country too. They need to learn how to behave in the bush. Or at least learn when not to intervene.

35.

Last time, the fire began when a lightning strike ignited a tree. Burned for hours as a small contained flame, monitored by the RFF, and allowed to develop into a range-wide fire.

On the third day, the fire was wandering lazily from patch to patch of fuel.

Will objected to the RFF's plan to bulldoze a bare-earth firebreak along the slope above his studio.

Heavy machinery wreaks havoc. The driveway is an existing break between the fire and buildings. Gravel tracks surround all the buildings. Another break is unnecessary.

Close to sundown, the RFF officer returned to tell Will that they were going ahead with the dozer's bare ground break. Will protested again.

That machine will tear things up. Difficult, sometimes impossible, to repair. And the fire isn't threatening anything. Who's going to repair the damage?

The next day, tankers drove all over the place putting out the fire. The trucks crushed ground plant communities that had recently begun to regenerate.

A couple of days later, Sam(antha) heard machinery down at the bottom of the property. Will went down to find a parked state department ute and a medium sized bulldozer with its blade against a burnt tree, cleats slipping in the sand, clawing the ground up.

Will finally spat the dummy. He walked up to the supervisor standing next to the parked ute.

What do you think you are doing? Stop that bulldozer.

The bulldozer was climbing up on its tracks, but having no effect on a mature peppermint gum burnt in the fire.

"Do you own this land?"

Yes, I own this land. Stop that bulldozer now. Or I will.

The foreman waved the driver to a halt. "Let me call my supervisor."

The foreman radioed his boss.

“We have an owner issue. Could you come?”

Minutes later, a ute with radio aerials and department door decals came rolling up. An officer with dark sun glasses asked Will what the problem was.

There is no reason to push that tree over. And the ‘dozer is churning up the ground. Who’s going to fix that?’

The officer relayed the RFF policy in circumstances following a fire:

“A tree branch killed a couple of volunteers in Gippsland. They parked their truck under a tree which dropped a branch and flattened the cab. Since then it has been policy to cut down trees that look dangerous.”

Has it occurred to you that perhaps you just shouldn’t park trucks under trees? And what threat is that tree causing?

“It could fall onto the track here.”

Don Quixote with less noble aims.

Your bulldozer doesn't seem to be able knock it over. That tree is solid hardwood. Its not about to go anywhere. It will probably regenerate if it doesn't get too much more attention from you.

And that wasn't a track until two days ago when your trucks pushed through. Soil is compacted right up the slope, where erosion is most likely and damage is most difficult to deal with. If we have a downpour before those ruts heal, it will be an almighty mess.

That ‘Killer Tree’ crap is right over the top. You people have been watching too much television. Sooner or later every tree that is standing will fall. Are you going to push them all over? Those burnt trees make good habitat as they age. Hollows and cracks. Most will re-sprout, a combination of new growth and ageing trunks. Ideal.

Leave them alone.

Look under that tree. The 'dozer has powdered the ground. Soil chewed up like that will be invaded by weeds, which may well have been brought in on your vehicles. Are you going to come back and sort it out, or isn't that as much fun as pushing trees over. You are supposed to be the Department that is expert on all this stuff.

The officer stood stiffly, hiding behind dark sunglasses. Silent.

I think you had better all get off my property, now. I'll stay here until you do.

Fuming. Bastards. Bloody experts.

Will held a steady rage at the prejudices and assumptions that people pressed upon the land, their lack of respect, their ignorance.

Scarcely anyone actually lives in bush anymore. These department personnel go home to fences in town. Or home to cleared farm.

Excesses are perpetrated habitually, unconsciously.

The sun has edged towards the horizon. Will has lost his shade. The heat on his skin brings him back to the job at hand.

He has been sitting there awhile. Will stretches his back and bends to pick up another stick.

36.

He is re-organising his study—its arrangement is no longer ideal. Writing is more simply served than sculpture. It requires little space, less equipment. He does not need the gear required to make music, to carve, to design, to edit.

Years ago, as a youth, when he first approached the possibility of being an artist, he had thought writing; a pencil and flat place to write. Paper of course. A little space. Then he had preferred confined spaces for writing. Now he wants horizons.

Back where I started from. Writing.

Gone full circle.

No, not quite a circle, a spiral.

Since it is winter, Will begins to organise in front of the heater centred on the west wall below the parameter window.

A desk topped with rosewood, Queensland maple legs and kauri shoulders.

Precious woods scavenged years ago when he was trying to produce an income free from the art world.

Handmade, uniquely designed furniture. No one was interested. Different story now. He was glad it never took off really. But he still enjoyed making tables.

The writing desk.

Top surface is dark, iron hard, thin, colourfully figured, 390 mm wide, 10 mm thick.

Its splits filled, stabilised with blue resin.

Its warp accommodated by design. Shoulders flawless like all kauri. Square column legs carry the proportions to the ground.

Spare and elegant.

Desk in front of heater. Garden (and the bush and the mountains beyond) through the windows.

Will wheels Herman Miller's basic black chair to the desk. Sits down in front of the laptop. Adjusts the chair to the desk.

Done. The rest of the room can wait. Writing to do.

37.

We live in a bruising time.

Will distances himself from anger, from indignation.

He stores sorrow as he can.

Celebrate what remains. It's still beautiful.

38.

As Will told the boys long ago now, **It's not easy.**

Since he and Sam(antha) arrived forty years ago, four large species have disappeared. Stone Curlews. Koalas. Bandicoots. Quolls. Who knows how many other species? Plants? Animals? How many small nocturnal lives?

Overcome by introduced pests. Foxes and cats. Goats and deer. Honeybees. Inedible weeds. And most terminally by encroaching humans.

Depths of ignorance about the bush are bottomless.

Can local environments remain viable? Is some fertilising fly or mosquito or beetle missing? How can soil microbes be restored? How long does it take the forest floor to re-form?

Nature wrestling with homelessness.

Bush replaced by hobby farms, holiday houses, suburban normal and agricultural ambitions on a massive scale. Extinctions unnoticed.

Nocturnal animals in soft fur, large eyes, delicate ears, fine paws, all unseen, unknown. Animals abroad when people sleep.

Bush reduced every year. Year after year, Happening here. Happening everywhere.

Done to death by people and more people.

Will wanted to understand country even as it disappeared.

39.

Fascinated by nature, he pondered the elegance of systems, the habits of energy. Cores.

Sculpture enclosed basic universal appetites, the aesthetics of energy flow, pattern and form developing into new form, new pattern.

Nothing was ever more absorbing. Mentally and physically.

Naively, he once thought that providing a vision of the natural world would encourage appreciation of and respect for nature.

I should have known better.

He did know better. For years, he had worked in the centre of the art world, where fashion trumps content nearly every time, where attitude substitutes for philosophy, where almost most everything is cosmetic.

Sculpture. A medium for vision? Scarcely possible.

40.

Will is attracted by difficulty.

He resonates with shimmers just ahead of his perception. Structures of nature, colours of distance, vast spaces outside our species.

Drawn to metabolism. Drawn to urges beyond our existence and 'just now' appetites.

Will realised long ago that sculpture as intellectual method was never going to be mainstream. Content was not expected.

What is an artist to do? **Double your bets and get on with it.**

41.

In the seventies, protecting land was difficult. The Land Act recognised no such use.

Will challenged land-usage categories that omitted conservation management altogether.

Hedge wattle regenerating on the place was on the noxious weeds list because the thorny stems stick in wool. Difficult to shear. Reduced the value of the clip. Increased the cost. Sheep cockies hated it. Almost every one on this area of the Wimmera was a sheep cocky

The law said they had to be removed. They weren't.

The vermin and noxious weeds inspector accused Will of thinking he was Robinson Crusoe. Put him on charge.

At least three species of small bird preferred hedge wattle to other nesting shrubs.

Will make an appointment to see the Head of the Department of Lands in the city.

After the meeting, he was given help to address pest problems with minimal impact on native flora and fauna.

A barest beginning. And a very long way to go.

42.

Will withdraws loyalty to his species. It clouds thinking.

Humans seem hell bent on destruction, if not of themselves, then of everything else.

The species has no inhibitions.

Extracting, always extracting, exhausting the world for comfort, or bare survival.

He turns his attention to the bush.

He learns. Nobody cares.

Humans are not good at constraining themselves.

43.

A couple of hours and the mountain roads will be dry. Will enjoys riding in the rain. He does not enjoy cleaning sticky road slurry off his motorcycles after he has ridden in the rain.

He waits for dry roads.

If no showers develop for the rest of the afternoon, he will ride.

If he can't ride, he will write.

Typing his mind absorbs him. Writing is the only thing that can sometimes deflect him from his daily burn. Apart from rain.

Today it will be Placebo, pretty and pretty fast MV Augusta 800. Throughly Italian bike. Will smiles to himself as he slides on his boots.

If it won't make the bike go faster, it isn't on there. If it's not integrated, it's not on there.

125 HP. Handling that challenges. Light as lace.

Horn is the most easily accessed control (Italian bike). Apart from the throttle (Italian bike).

A quintessential motorcycle. An engine, two wheels. 21st century safety.

It will keep me young until it kills me.

Placebo. A good Italian name.

'Keeping me young until it kills me' is a bit smart ass, but very few wish to know about Will's interest in speed.

Someone sometimes presses on, curious about a person Will's age riding high performance motorcycles.

He responds variously:

We are swaddled. Almost nothing in our environment is dangerous. It makes us sleepy.

Meditation is the first point of a cycle. Speed, at the end of the cycle, is right beside it.

Completely contained.

Involvement is immediate. Responsibility becomes a nerve skill.

Riding is direct. Falling off is not recommended.

Habits move aside. Senses are ignited. Simple.

44.

One of his best friends at a BBQ, after a few beers, asked Will how he justified this activity, given his public stance on conservation and making a small footprint?

O.K., many of the values that I generally abhor are embedded in the design, manufacture and use of motorcycles. They are an indulgence. There is the shadow of macho. There is consumption of fossil fuel. Many are way too noisy. They do attract some undesirable people. What doesn't?

I know, a frivolous use of resources. And it's dangerous.

It keeps me alert. Calms me. Absorbs anger and disappointment. Does little harm.

I am still human, still part of this expensive time, still capable of doing things just because I want to.

45.

Cold grey day. Sun a fuzzy disc through heavy cloud cover.

Will is lurking inside, Expects to be inside all day. *Abysmal weather.*

His is tempted to retreat back to bed. Hibernate until there is more light.

46.

He prefers email to any other form of abstract personal communication.

With the phone, I'm never sure what might be interrupted at the other end. Barging in. It's not comfortable. I dislike the distraction myself and can't imagine anyone else liking it.

Taking a break. Good time for email.

He has half a dozen regular correspondents: his brother, others.

The email of the day is to Elizabeth, now with two adult sons and an extensive tribe of relatives. She had just played four concerts in ten days. Bach and stuff. Still buzzing.

She was forced to postpone her career to raise the boys after Paul died. Busy being mother and mother and father or whatever. For years.

She practiced when she could, and when both boys had departed for university, she resumed serious playing.

She improved year after year from being accomplished at the beginning. She reveals the wit of Bach. An extraordinary commitment to an earlier time and culture.

Somebody has to do it.

Her brain marinates in Bach. Garnished with Baroque.

Her mother was a conservative French Catholic with a circus background. ? Her father was Irish, probably an atheist. Rationalist. Country lawyer.

The Protestant Bach wrote music straight from God. That must have challenged a young Roman Catholic organist.

Elizabeth said she was putting up (with?) her niece and husband and baby, her nephew and his 'friend', all casual dependants. The niece was there not long ago. Elizabeth's sons live there, one above Paul's workshop with his woman, or partner, or friend, or whatever. The other lives quietly in the back reaches of the house. He comes and goes to the city. Teaches Tai Chi.

Will to Elizabeth.

*To the Reliable Resource, much more dependable than the Australia Council
--Aunt Elizabeth.*

Better you than me. Part of the reason I'm going into the desert is to avoid pop-up interruptions. Need a break from human foibles.

And I need some sunshine. Winter in Victoria is worth missing. The reptilian brain stem craves warmth and brightness.

I should live in the outback. Though much of it is ravaged.

A lot of country out there has been wounded by Other Place practices and perceptions. The bush continues to be violated. Grazing. Extraction industries.

But there are still nooks and crannies of undisturbed country.

I'm anticipating red soils, clear light, wide horizons, animals and plants, geological time. Clean sand. Undisturbed. Indifferent. Great country.

Elizabeth, I can't imagine why you are not inspired by all this.

I am happy to test this season's apple scrumpy on a regular basis to document the ageing/curing processes. Hope all our dreams come true.

We'll organise to get together soon after I return. Not quite sure when that might be.

Will

Elizabeth is a great friend. Independent woman. Talented and disciplined.

Understands the power of art without fussing about it. Wildly conservative, completely tolerant. **Crazy. Like all my friends.**

Practised deliveries. Penetrating interpretations. Good humour. More valuable than the community notices.

It is good to keep in touch. Sounds like she could use a break.

47.

Will prepares for the desert. New front bearings for the ute. New deep cycle batteries for the slide-on Back*Pac.

The vehicle has been maintained. It should be reliable.

Everything in the unit needs to be cleaned and repacked. He lists everything that he needs to take. He has a week.

He will stumble onto some of it. His headlamp has wandered, purloined for other duties. (Stored with the candles, of course.)

Equipped to allow time off the grid. Freshly serviced, the LandCruiser Unit can stay out for to six weeks with a single occupant. If Will deploys its solar panels, it has power. Holds plenty of water. Only the wheels, ladder and props have ground contact.

Two gas stoves, in/out. Chair (or two). Medicine and First Aid. Clothes. Fridge. Some boiled eggs. Beer. Tuna. Long underwear. Walking pants with zip off legs. Spare specs. **Can opener! Don't forget the can opener.**

Breathing machine, for Pete's sake. Chargers for phone, computer.

In a few days, Will will be on desert roads, meeting few, if any, other vehicles. Big spaces. Magic country. He anticipates the warmth.

He dreams he's in the sun for his birthday. 75th, three quarters of a century. Five days from now.

48.

Will still hasn't packed.

You could need quite a few clothes in the desert.

Pleasantly warm days. Freezing nights.

Walking boots, slide on shoes, Crocs.

Long Johns, just in case. Couple of pairs of light pants. Pairs of medium pants. Socks. T shirts. Some light, others heavy. A couple of collared and sleeved shirts.

Mohair blanket, warm comforter, soft sheets. couple of pillows for under the reading light. Though that matters less since the self-illuminated ebook arrived.

He'll fill the kitchen system with 60 litres of rain water. Precious stuff where he is going.

49.

Will photographed stunning views around the his camp. And went to bed.

How long to stay? Another night. Nights?

He opened one eye.

The Back*Pac had to be set up again last night, wound down yesterday to move.

Up and down, up and down, up and down.

Will is still tired. A bit sore. Yesterday was heavy duty.

In the morning, his eye focuses on a tree through the window opposite.

He opens the other eye to a sandy creek bed winding back into a rocky gorge.

Out of bed and outside.

Trees from the ancient river red gums along the creek bed to thready dwarf melaleuca clinging to cracks in bedrock higher up.

Beautiful out here.

Will gets dressed, goes down to the creek bed. People have spent time here before him. Ashes of fires. But the flow patterns in the sand are undisturbed since the last rain.

Well, a few animal tracks.

He unfolds his chair beneath an enormous river red gum. He knows they drop branches. It's worth the (minute) risk. Solid shade and the enormous dignity of long survival. Shelter from the wind and sun.

He stuffs some litter, left behind by past visitors, into a paper bag. Drops it into the passenger side of the ute's cabin. Returns to his seat carrying his computer and wearing a warm shirt. **Afternoon already.** Fresh wind has sprung up. **Forgot the water bottle.** Went back to fetch it.

Finally settled, Will begins to write.

50.

The landscape of central Australia. Rusty hills. Ridges of rock. Gibber plains of pebbles.

(As Will wrote, he smiled, amused that it sounded like the worst of all tourist copy.)

The visual velvet of spinifex growing where ever it can dig in. (Most places.)

Shell blue sky.

He is fortunate, here after the best rain in years.

Everything is fresh and fragrant.

No tourists.

No suburbanites.

Mostly they reserve their attention for one another. Good thing too.

The retired-from-suburbs roll across Australia. Glowing reports about their grandchildren to a perpetually fresh audience.

The landscape is a backdrop. Most take their televisions more seriously.

Allah protect us from tourists.

A novel cause for dust into the air.

This time it is the old, the retired. It is perhaps their first foray into unconscious vandalism.

Tourists are not allowed on this Aboriginal land. I had permission. A friend of a friend was helpful.

51.

Last night was so quiet, and Will was so tired that even the irritating rattle of the fridge was absorbed.

Hours and hours later, Will wakes slowly. Bright light in the morning.

The wind is rattling eucalyptus leaves. The birds are at it.

Will slips out of the bed clothes. Dresses quickly. It's cool in the mornings.

He is alone. He has been alone for three days.

The place is great. And growing on him.

The Cycle of Arrival unfolds.

First the drama. The distances. The colours. The clear air. The red earth.

The second day is calmer. The variety of birds. Every tree.

By the third day, a bond begins to grow.

A bond that starts with absorption.

There is much to move your mind here.

The subtlety, the elegance, is stunning.

Each leaf and toe a history of adaption to unreliable and extreme conditions.

No green and every green: green-yellow, green-blue, green-grey, pale greens, shiny greens.

Depleted soils. Quartz and iron. Micron particle sizes.

52.

Frisky wind last night. Bright moon. Raucous electrical storm. On the truck bed, The Back*Pac trembled when it wasn't rocking. The luxury of a massage. Wind chorus in the leaves. Mellow Will.

Hope the vibration doesn't bury the feet of the props in the sand. Or shake the ladder loose. Will isn't going to get up to check. Might have left the outside cupboard open. He is tired and cozy. It is warm in the bed and freezing outside.

Sometime in the night, he scrambled out of bed, wound the windows shut, peed in the bottle, looked out at the pale night, and scrambled back onto the bed shelf.

He woke up still rocking in bed.

Squinted out at a bright cold morning.

53.

You could get drunk on these colours, Will announces to the air.

This red land sinks into the mind.

Will has never actually looked up the definition of desert, but there is no reason to associate this country with desolation, or lack of colour, or scarcity.

The desert dances with the surfaces and shapes of long resolution.

54.

He is sitting on his camp chair in front of the mighty river gum. Its kin wind up and down the dry creek.

Clear sunshine heats the back of his black bush jacket and warms the exposed sand.

Hasn't seen a soul in five days.

Will has slipped deeply into this place.

Don't pretend to be indigenous. I'm a ripple in the waves of people who have arrived in this country usually from nasty situations elsewhere. Most came expressly to exploit country.

Will settles his portable stool into the sand, pointed upstream. Sits down, lifts his eyes to the track of trees winding to the middle distance.

How do people begin to destroy such places?

55.

A bright sparse space.

Social precedence fades, need for self evaporates.

Western realities do not include the filters of this land.

I'll ease into this.

56.

**From a vantage, Will examines his time, his place, his world,
the drifting currents of experience.**

He isn't bitter, or stern, blinkered, or blind.

But you can't understand humans without some distance, some objectivity.

Seeing clearly is difficult while avoiding despair and disappointment.

Still, Will enjoys being alive.

**He is still a 20-21st century human being. He assumes comfort and high
consumption. But he is not unaware.**

57.

**He begins to think about moving on. But Will enjoys the company of the
giants in the creek bed. Feels in a right place amongst the enclosing
mountains.**

Maybe tomorrow.

**Days since he has had a conversation. (He must send a note to the owners of
this land when he returns, thanking them.)**

He is feeling whole again.

No conversations about my accent, how many children I have.

Grandchildren.

Free of recommendations about Places to Go, Things to See.

Nearest shopping. Spent professions. Spending the kid's inheritance.

What kind of tyres to use, close calls with fuel. How to do the laundry on the road. Dangers of travelling alone. Dangers of snakes and spiders and bugs and bushes. Dangers.

Complaints of dust. State of the roads.

Medical histories.

They have melted in the sun. Grey nomads, tourists. They bore me boneless.

White man's history and ownership.

Rarely attentive to the deep reserves of the land. Or the native people.

Tourists make it difficult to see, to feel the weight of timeless seasons, to infuse the stillness of this landscape. They seem not to suspect it exists. I guess it hides from all the noise they make.

Trees, shrubs, grasses, mountains, plains bring everything to the moment.

Deep and profoundly indifferent.

58.

A large flat insect has just scurried up a fine grained slope, leaving eyelash tracks in its wake. Travelling one tree to another. Body covered with two different band widths. Broad over the thorax, slender over the tail, patterned alternations of pale brown and yellow. Tree bark.

Beauty devised to hide. The working world.

Will smiles, always delighted by the extravagance of nature.

Breeze brushing through the leaves. Colours of distance. Calm greater than the word.

Successes of an ancient depleted land.

A level of clarity here that is lost in company. Lost in self awareness.

Maybe tomorrow.

59.

After sundown, mopokes soften the night with their onomatopoeic two-tone pronouncements of presence.

Last night, three birds, each at a distant point up or down the creek bed.

Much easier to hear them at night than see them during the day. Fluffy collections of soft feathers invisibly hugging trees in plain sight.

Will sometimes tells of a gasping fright he got when a tree branch he was about to lean against exploded in a blur of flight.

During the day, galahs.

Pink heads lead pearl grey bodies tearing through the air.

Their minds are probably pink too. They love to fly, tilting through trees, tightly turning in open air, swinging from branches, feather dancing to land.

Eagles, hawks, and falcons hang in the sky, or soar, or dart. This country is not as empty as it looks.

Something is supporting a lot of predators.

Ravens here have a chuckle in their language quite unlike any sound made by their southern cousins. Chuckle. Attentive birds.

Ravens have the cognitive skills of a four year old human, according to "recent studies".

They seem smarter than that to me.

And, most common birds of all, anonymous little brown birds, busy in the bushes, shrubs, grass and trees. Too quick to identify.

60.

Will opened to the landscape around him and shunted it to memory.

He would draw upon this vision for months to come.

He tidied up, ready to wind the Back*Pac down in the morning.

61.

Thunder during the night.

In the morning, fast skies full of black cloud and threatening horizontal layers bordering colder and colder temperatures.

Quick showers, a bit of hail.

A perfect time to drive. Light rain has settled the dust. And the desert is still in bloom.

62.

Will loves to drive. Particularly when headed for home. 1200 kilometres away.

Back to my ground. My lucky there.

The bond always grows deeper. And deeper. As it does with landscape.

45 year perseverance. 45 years of learning. Watching land.

Will is refreshed after the break. Time away in some other place. A distraction reminding how deep, how home is home.

63.

The warm glow of the interior is slipping away. It's bloody freezing.

Southern Ocean winds deliver complete cold.

Should go out and load the ute. Empty plastic containers runneth over around here.

Will knows exactly how much rubbish they get with the stuff that they need. This far from town rubbish is not collected. He has to take it to the tip himself.

He goes when he has a load (ute tray) of rubbish or recycles.

All too often. There are four recycle bins and a bunch of bottles. The bins are filled with empty cleaning containers, food packaging, cardboard, shrink wraps, plastic so tough that you have to cut your way in.

Another conundrum. Packaging consumes on top of consumption. Wasteful? Packaging does protect things. But surely there is a way to reduce this small mountain being loaded into the bed of the ute.

The upside is:

Packages almost always hold the stated content.

Soft fruits, tomatoes are nestled. Goods arrive undamaged.

Packages come padded, lined, stuffed, through the air, on trucks, in the mail.

Anything over the web will get here pretty quickly and in good nick.

So what's least wasteful? To lose security of goods without adequate packaging. Or to recycle all this packaging.

Overdue for the tip. Maybe tomorrow won't be quite so arctic.

I don't want to go to the tip. Probably crowded anyway. Weekend warriors.

I will write. Inside by the heater, listening to fast wind in the she-oaks, snug.

His unassailable argument when avoiding things that he doesn't want to do.

Writing is the virtuous excuse for dodging chores by doing something *More Important*.

So write.

Convenient virtue for Will.

Works every time.

His most fruitful muse.

64.

Will swings into his desk chair.

Thighs and calves pleasantly throbbing. Toes and soles tingling.

Might have sore muscles later. Maybe not.

Four days between walks is stretching it. Some things about old age are bloody quick. Losing condition in four days.

He walked today and feels vivid.

65.

There are a lot of things you could say about riding a bike.

Aromatherapy.

Ram jet of perfumed air. After rain, the smell is a swoon.

Of course, in the real world, you will also smell road kill, the fumes of poorly maintained diesel engines, and the deep frying vat at the pub.

You are out in the air.

I'm here, my ride road: A lean road. Tip. Lean.

Another lean. Bend and balance. Traction varies.

20 kilometres of lightness and back again.

Usually, the road is pretty good.

Rocks fall. And branches. Slippery debris. Animals jaywalk.

There are a few warped surfaces best avoided. Curves off camber. Corrugated patches.

Tourists are apt to pay little attention to their driving. You need to be ready for your lane to be occupied by oncoming traffic, particularly around blind corners.

But the ride.

The ride is exhilarating.

66.

Left, instead of usual right, at the bottom of the drive.

This left walk took him past houses, one density point above suburbs.

After twenty years of solitude, a show farm and a residence over the road followed by a grand residence. The single older house, next to an enormous dam which doesn't hold water well, is unoccupied.

The mountains, a purple majesty behind them all.

Beautiful setting, of course. Bucolic. Pastoral on a Theme of Green at the moment. Accents of white sheep, multicoloured alpacas, black cows over rolling hills.

Will's far boundary follows a creek that drains its valley to the north. It is running now. For the first time in years, Occasional Creek has steady flow. Pleasant sight, waterfall to hear, gushing water and frogs.

Coming up, across the road, is a Palatial House Beautiful complete with swimming pool. Screened by a grid of mixed trees. Cherries down the drive.

Will thinks it is a bit nuts to have a swimming pool in country as dry as this. He can hear the rationales for the swimming pool, "It's emergency water storage for bush fires".

Diversity diminishes as the environment is deprived of its ancient patterns.

They have scrubbed the property to prevent fire. The house is safer since rebuilding with external rendering. And the raked garden. Safer for them, but another nibble at the bush.

The next property is growing sheep. Harvesting grain. (With the annual aid of scare guns.) Planting (European) trees in a row down the drive. Grand stone gate heads at the drive. Completely European.

That grand stone gateway looks a bit lonely out there. A grazing property being 'improved' by an owner insensitive to the environment with which he is surrounded.

Another intervention in the natural.

Back on Will's side of the road, the Site Reserve extended the bush of his land or vice versa. The reserve had never been grazed. At least not officially. The understory is lush and robust compared to his land, grazed for a hundred years, just a fence line between destruction and endurance. Given time the reserve will replenish the bare slopes his place.

Will falls into a reverie on the walk back, doesn't see the ducks and reflections of the mountains in the dam. They usually capture him completely. It annoys him that he blanks out on the way home, returns to work inside his head.

He sees, but does not see. The world fades out without his attention. **Very quantum.**

67.

Warm and sunny. No wind.

A day to trim trees.

Standing in a cellulose coma for years, the oyster bay pines and she-oaks planted on the edge of the clearing east of the house have just had a season of perfect conditions somehow. They have all grown ferociously, trebling their biomass in one spurt.

One of the joys of living in the bush is that it is always perfect conditions for something no matter what the weather is.

They needed trimming.

Do one slowly. The idea is to get the foliage up off the ground, so that a grass fire is less likely to grow into a crown fire. Should work with these trees.

Whether the trimmed trees control fire or not, they lengthen the view into the bush. Establish a protecting canopy. Stuff will come up.

The off cuts will be handy. The planting is on bare sand. Trimmed branches, fine ends aimed upslope contain erosion and give a bit of grip to seeds.

Loppers, secateurs, gloves and a hat.

A gentle afternoon among leaves. Warm dappled light. Damp ground.

Nice.

68.

Will enjoys the way days pass through the house.

Shifting transparencies and reflections line the rooms as morning moves through afternoon into evening and night.

Usually been too on-the-way-somewhere-else to stop and savour the light and shadow, the transparency and opacity.

Silly really.

The house is easy. Always attractive in the background. Rewarding in detail.

A pleasant prospect, catching moments around the place.

Proportion as reassuring as heartbeats. Comfortable patterns.

He had an advantage that few designers have. He had lived on site for thirty years when the final house was designed.

He knew how hot it got. And how wet. How cold. Where water accumulated. He knew, too, that he may not have witnessed real extremes.

He knows where rock lies beneath the building.

The house is stable. The wide foundation cured for ten years before it was asked to bear weight. Square salt-glazed bricks cured in the grass.

Fire resistant, solar heated, insulated up the wazoo, standing in its own shade during summer, house.

Will imagines that all of this might seem quite primitive in 50 years. He hopes it does.

The sun tracks along square bricks, mauve cast concrete, warm render, select stringy-bark, galvanised tin and glass. Layers of light.

A comfortable environment folded into a beautiful, severe landscape.

The seeing is silent; the sights are generous.

69.

Early in his career, a public art gallery had acquired one of Will's works.

Three meters high, liquid surface achieved with traditional Chinese red lacquer and fine lapidary flour.

His first mature work. By then, he had outdistanced his early self-teaching.

From then, all of Will's sculptures are about incidents of energy.

As time went on, Will's perceptions deepened.

When the gallery's piece was made, Will was exploring situations of movement, of penetration and colliding form, basic rhythms.

The sculpture was a horizontal pond, penetrated by two vertical thrusts upward. Streams very different in scale and circumstance.

The large force has collided with a form of organic potential, an event with consequence. *Circumstance of Beginning*.

70.

Sculpture was always a function of two things.

First, the material had to allow development of precise form.

And the content had to be real, accurate and honest.

Will's reality lit the shapes of metabolism.

It watched dances of particles.

A reality that suits sculpture perfectly.

Space beyond verbal equivalent. Information that cannot be said.

The shapes, unsurprisingly, are precise; shapes determined by the behaviour of energy.

Energy allows the future. Novel environments arise from energy.

Elegant forces down the centre of things.

Describing particles, in the realm of visual perception, required a material which would accept fine adjustment.

To do the job, it had to be both strong and flexible. And have some prospects of survival.

And, it had to be the cheapest material that would do the job. Sculpture was notorious for not selling.

Paying for sculpture was a strain. As Will made no effort to sell, it was an accepted loss.

The exploitation of artists is on a scale far beyond him personally, like racism and all the rest of those things that seek to diminish people.

A way the world takes advantage of those who are busy paying attention to important things.

71.

Did I choose it or did it choose me?

His experience of sculpture was limited when he approached university. His hometown boasted a Monument to Pioneer Mothers and some Civil War general on a horse. And he bought a cast bronze horse in a second hand shop when he was a boy.

Nothing much to prepare him for what lay ahead.

As soon as he was introduced to the possibilities of making sculpture, he was hooked.

He was drawn to the physical skills required, the tensions between mind and material.

Fascinated by the transparency of space. And that space contained everything in our experience.

Fascinated by clarity of form.

Drawn by the fact that sculpture was underdeveloped, as it remains.

Nobody expects a sculpture to mean anything. Most of them don't.

The least developed of the visual arts.

Will used to joke, *Anyone who has enough brains to be a sculptor also has enough brains not to be a sculptor.*

He stopped saying it when he discovered that others were offended.

He stopped saying it, but he still thought it was funny and true.

He'd stopped telling people about the funniest sign in the world for the same reasons.

People were offended, or put off.

He still thought it was hilarious.

Outside a town in the district, the local horse racing club have installed their sign on the boundary of the cemetery. It cracked him up. A "Turf Club" sign on the cemetery boundary, lawns behind interrupted only by headstones

It is hilarious. Sometimes people have too much proper and not enough bend.

He was running out of material in the city. He wanted more space, a natural environment. They shifted to a place on the side of a range of mountains. A wide variety of flora and fauna. Granite tors. A landscape of time and place.

What began as an intellectual attraction to energy became a deeper celebration of basic situations and pure form.

72.

These days, he feels sensually deprived after a couple of hours of urban.

Too many people. Too much about people. More of the same in every direction. It's a parody of itself. The Emperor's New Clothes.

Not just here around him either. The whole world is getting denser with humans.

Twice in his life now, people have replaced natural environments with themselves where he lived on the edge of things.

Will wonders if they can value anything other than themselves.

How important can art be in the circumstances?

It should be important.

It can provide platforms for reality, a growing need you would have thought.

It should make a difference, the real stuff.

But it doesn't.

Still, celebrate the elegance.

One half his commitment.

The other half is the land.

Return this patch of bush to health.

The land confronted his ignorance with example.

Considered constantly for years, variables unfold to simpler shapes.

Those energies lead through all life. Self-contained beginnings. Cycles.

73.

There are a few ways to think about sculpture: Cinderella of the arts; A waste of time and space; Images of the Gods.

Sculpture has not been the most nourishing of the arts since classical Persia. Since Khmer times. Since China began. Since Egypt.

Doesn't matter. You can develop the discipline of material and skill and vision yourself.

Will admires tools. He loves the shaving sound of a cutting edge. The fresh smells of materials newly exposed to the air. The challenge of attempting (and not always succeeding) to build for long life.

Bruised fingers. Bent back. Aching muscles. Cramps. Sounds a bit dramatic, but, ask any athlete, extending your body is going to hurt.

You must be convinced that the end result is going to be worth the effort.

Freeze flowing form with your mind without flicker, to the end of making. An image so real that it can be recalculated exactly.

Reveal mind-sweeping spaces.

Will enjoys the stealth with which a form is approached.

It's not exactly fun. Not really. It's serious hard work. Intense.

The payoff is the exhilaration: **I did that. I made that.**

74.

Will had just managed to orchestrate a three vehicle collision in his own garage without being on or in any of the vehicles. He was standing to the side, wondering how it happened.

Dumb shit. Most abusive.

Will had a number of belittling names to call himself in temporary self-loathing. When he had been inattentive. Or slow to react.

Dimwit. Generic. Everyone calls themselves a dimwit, or should, from time to time.

Dip-stick. A curious comparison by his father of him to the oil gauge on an engine of the '50's. Will expected it was insulting, but he could never quite work out how. His father's sense of humour could be elusive for a young fellow.

Blowhole. Blowhole inherited from a great aunt who somehow convinced young Will that the term was wicked, rude and crude. So, of course, he adopted it.

Though Will could get very annoyed with himself, by and large, he didn't.

Other things were always more interesting than self absorption.

75.

Will felt cornered.

It began during one of the black squares of his chequered career when he had little money and no prospect of any more.

Trying to avoid yet another academic appointment, he asked Lester, successful business man who had purchased one of his works, for a job. Always generous Lester took him on a tour of his plant and asked him what he would like to do.

Will, trying to keep his moral debt down, insisted on an ordinary job in the factory.

His job was quality control.

He couldn't do it. For two weeks, he rushed between testing stations.

From entering the plant to leaving it, Will was beaten by the noise level, assaulted by vibration in his bones, shaken by the floor. He was beginning to feel slightly ill all the time.

He took an inaccurate measurement and spoiled a run on the line.

Will panicked. He was too unexperienced to deal sensibly with the situation.

He walked off the job without a word to Lester leaving a ridiculous note about liking Mozart too much to continue.

Lester was a warm man always in good honour.

Embarrassed by his own behaviour, Will returned to the bush breaking with Lester despite the fondness he felt.

But like a woman who disappears from her wedding, our imperfect man returned to freedom.

76.

Way back when, Will investigated suggestion and persuasion techniques. If anyone could mess with him, he wanted to know how.

Q. How, on earth, can the CocaCola corporation, which markets a sugar drink with negative health consequences, be so successful.

A. Because its propaganda is impeccable and has been for a long time now.

Fresher than fresh, better looking than attractive, good times for all. Everyone gorgeous and happy and disease free. That's quite a drink.

He found art nobler, prettier than propaganda.

Art is civilised. It invites a person to see, to accept another reality.

Unlike propaganda which persuades a person.

Art is an opportunity, more profound and more self-respectful than the perpetual sell.

He needed to build a platform from which the world could be viewed in greater depth, producing some addition to existing consciousness.

It had to structure reality.

Fashion was shallow, free and easy. The appearance of art.

The 'look of art' was connected, contemporary. Important. And would almost certainly increase in value.

All guaranteed by a completely self-enclosed art world.

He side-stepped social mafia, skirted the blustering winds of expertise.

Will began to explore his discipline.

More and more fascinating. More and more demanding.

Not like anything else happening.

Will removed himself.

The location of his last city-studio was secret. He edged into the shadows.

And then he moved away.

77.

Everything important had always gone Will's way, an inexplicable flicker of favour. Statistical anomaly; he is fortunate. His life has been in the nick of time. Near misses. He got through everything entire and unowned.

He valued his freedom beyond anything. Explored without sponsorship. Kept himself out of debt. Kept his vision unfiltered by influence.

You cannot see the world if you are not free to look.

Will began to see through surfaces to supporting structures.

He celebrated the elegance of the moving system, watched developing events, saw futures hatch.

Principles of energy.

Will lived in the day, caught the patterns around him, tickled his boundaries.

78.

If he thought much about what was going on in the world, it was depressing.

And that doesn't do anyone any good.

What do you do?

It is difficult to be a responsible human being.

There are too many of us, way too many.

A plague that consumes all before it.

We are climate change.

"We have met the enemy and the enemy is us," (an earlier fresh spirit, Walt Kelly.)

All of us.

The whole enormous number of us. All eating. All drinking. Avoiding the weather. Wearing out shoes. Traipsing around and around and around.

Consumers, every one.

We should value constraint.

79.

It's plainly a problem.

A basic problem.

So why do we hear so little of it?

Vested interests of one sort or another.

There is still war.

Corporate practice seems to include no ethics at all, driven by profit as the corporation itself defines profit. Sometimes corporations are responsible, but sometimes they are plundering swashbucklers, eager to rape and pillage.

Never hear a whisper about the our population explosion.

Once in awhile, some pontification about maximum population, but never a mention of optimum population levels which we passed some time ago.

Our obsession with ourselves is complete.

How tedious is that?

80.

Call it Abstract. Erotic. Organic. Neo-Ultra-Retro-Restructured. The information in Will's sculpture is accurate and will remain accurate tomorrow, no matter what it is called. Sooner or later, that is going to be obvious. When the dust settles.

The art world is a distraction. So much appreciation.

He stays away and gets on with it.

81.

Will fell off his adventure bike.

Silly really. He thought about going around this washed out stretch of Gluepot Road on the return trip.

But he didn't. And he slid down the side of a washout and was unseated. Wouldn't have happened on a donkey. Zigged when he should have zagged.

Wrong tyres in the situation. No harm done. Well, a bruised instep. And a tiny purple patch on one hip. Protected by his riding gear.

Four kilometres from home, Will picked himself up and brushed sand off his face. He rang home.

Sam(antha) came to the rescue.

(Will suspected that she had answered another phone call before she came to his aid. He'd been hanging around for a fair while, his motorcycle sprawled across the road. Fortunately there was no traffic.)

With Sam(antha)'s help, the bike was righted and ridden out of loose wet sand.

The bike is parked inside the studio shed. Needs a little crash repair. Busted hand protector. Glued and taped. **I'm enjoying this. A Mad Max look. Meanest (and only) KTM in town.**

82.

The tomato, onion and lettuce two step.

Will, slicing vegetables for a breakfast taco, moves between work benches and cutting boards.

Breakfast: Cottage cheese and spicy bean fill. Beans packed in individual serves, one taco per packet. Corn tortilla. Tomato. Onion.

Great start for a day.

Cooking is such a pleasure. So contained. Prepare and eat and done.

Instant gratification compared to day after day, week after week, month after month, beavering away, working towards high finish in the future.

Will enjoys thinking about combinations of flavours and processes of cooking.

And, if I don't cook, I don't get my chilli hits.

83.

This is the craziest time of the year.

Freezing winds from the southern oceans seize the day. Warm breezes from the desert interior cushion the next day.

The generations-old standard joke was that you never had time to get bored with the weather. Of course. Ha, ha.

In fact, rapid changes in daily temperatures can knock you around.

The body feels tangled in its own regulation. While adjustments are being made for cold conditions, it is warm again. Everyone feels shaken after a week of wild fluctuation.

European metabolisms are too slow for this chaos. Maybe in a few generations.

Will doesn't mind changing conditions.

It's true, you really don't have time to get bored with the weather.

Apart from dismal cloud cover that can last for days and days right at the end of 'winter'. That makes him grumpy.

Aboriginal calendars describe the year with more accuracy than the Georgian one. Aboriginals had six or seven seasons around here, I think. Maybe more.

But that's all Will knows about the Aboriginal Annual.

Some description of seasons applies to this landscape. Would be interesting to know what it is. A lot of things would be interesting. Place names for the Range.

A gust of chill wind rattles the south window on its way into the study. Will gets up to crank it shut. Just opened it this morning when it was warm as toast.

Out the window, black bottoms of storm clouds.

84.

The final result of the net has turned the entire world into an exchange.

There is a lot of information, some of it accurate.

Information generated by humans. For humans.

Where's the breadth in that? It's a complex planet.

What's the name of that Greek creep who got hooked on an image of himself in a pool? Narcissus.

Eternal selfie. Eternal self absorption.

There are other things to look at besides us. A lot of other things to look at.

87.

He is rational about his future.

He develops strategies towards likelihoods.

He will ride as long as he is able. He might even trade for some more comfortable machine in due course. Hard to imagine. He has always ridden naked bikes.

He never found a better way to stay tuned than riding. Knows of no better way to calibrate his body.

It's possible that riding might take him out one day. He is all right with that, hoping for a quick demise, rather than a crippling accident. He hopes the bike doesn't get damaged too much if it happens.

In the event that he can no longer ride, there is still space for attention.

He can imagine leading a less physical life than he does now and still be gripped with interest.

Almost no matter what, I can write.

The greatest freedom saved for last