

## Tiny House

Danielle lives in a tiny house in a large paddock covered in flowering thistles. The wooden home is self-contained and sits on wagons wheels, partially sunk in the soft red earth after a season of La Niña rains. She kicks the nearest wheel with her sensible black gumboot and says *oof* in a performative way as the wheel holds steady. She lives alone so there is no one to answer her, but she prefers it this way, even now as muddy floodwaters creep through the barbed wire fence along the edge of her property.

The swift flowing water moves through the river gums in silky streams, discreet babbles and wet murmurs, lost in the hum of the surrounding bush. Cicadas vibrate and crows caw and puffy white clouds sigh as the firm wind pushes them east. Meanwhile the swollen river expands over its banks, and the insects and birds and sky overhead conceal the rising, urgent floodwaters; measured a finger width a minute higher against Danielle's ant ridden, crumbling, fence posts.

The taupe water sloshes across her strawberry patch and pulls each plant in the last row under before she turns inside, taking the time to knock her boots against the bottom step with deliberate care, to shake the loose mud and hay grass off.

Her tiny house is compact and functional with the bare minimum of things to be comfortable. Natural timber floors and wood-panelled cupboards painted in seafoam green. There is a tiny kitchenette with a tiny stove and behind them more tiny cupboards for her bathroom and few remaining clothes. A spare pair of overalls and two hand-knit sweaters, and one dusty grey suit held over from her former life. Danielle was an anxious woman until she found her worries to be proportional to the number of things for which she was personally responsible.

She bought her exit from a man who grew cacti and smelt of old tobacco, rented a modest-sized van, then drove the triangular structure north.

Now she climbs the stairs to her bedroom loft, although she prefers to think of it as an attic, tucked up safe and warm inside the roof. The space is bare, just a double mattress and linen sheets pulled up tight against two plump pillows, under the golden glow of solar-powered fairy lights wrapped around log trusses. She pulls a leather documents wallet out from beneath the bed, filled with photos of the bush. She pours other small pieces of her life into a hiking pack from the downstairs cupboard and closes the door to her tiny house.

Up the track she toasts sourdough bread on an open fire. Smears it with salted butter from a recycled jar as the flood picks her tiny house up off its wheels and floats it away downstream.

Soon she will begin crunching up the gravel, back to the main road, with her few remaining possessions slung over one shoulder, ready to start once more.