



The year is turning, in the northern hemisphere I guess there is a feeling that spring has arrived at last, here the days are bright and sunny but there is a chill in the air. We have even had fires in the evening, I'm not completely sure its cold enough to justify a fire but I like the idea while we can.

Steph said at the start of the year that we would be away from our house for 70% of the year. I did listen but I'm not sure I completely sure I really grasped what that meant. Well here we are after four months, and we have done two stints house sitting, one locally and one on the south island and we have also done a stint house painting for friends and

now we are about to embark on a four month trip to Europe, I think I am starting to get the hang of it.

The house painting was interest-



ing. We volunteer at our local community repair café but Steph wanted to do something else, something more personal. We have been friends with Catherine and Sarah and family since we got to NZ, in fact Catherine interviewed Steph via Skype all those years ago. We have seen the family grow up and leave home and as Catherine and Sarah now live on a boat they need to sell the house. It needed painting and the garden sorting out before that could happen and that's hard work when you both have full time jobs. So Steph said we could do it. After all we painted our house, inside and out when we were horrified how much it would cost, and also we could stay in the house while we painted it, there was a fold down bed and it was walking distance into Wellington city. So that's what we did for three weeks. We painted and even had time to go down to performances in the botanical gardens and to the free music festival CubeDupa. It's a great combination, we both get a real feeling of





achievement painting, its something that we can contribute and complete, and we get to go and be City Kids for a bit. I even weirdly liked taking heat pump filters down and cleaning them. Not sure any prospective buyer will notice but I did.

As City Kids we were able to walk down to the theatre for “In Other Words” which did feel like a bit of a pamphlet about dementia,





“Pictures at an Exhibition”
– its so good to hear a live
orchestra and even “An
evening with Graham
Norton” which was fun.
Its such a treat to be able
to walk down an evening
out and then potter back



up the hill after-
wards.

Then after all that I
had a cataract oper-

ation. My eyesight has been going off since the middle of last year and this year has been really quite problematic. There is a bit more guesswork than you



would like involved in crossing the road, and for a while now subtitled films have been a bit problematic. Everyone tells me that when you have them done its fantastic, you have perfect eyesight. The surgeon was more circumspect, he said he could give me back the eyesight I had when I was 25, the thing is my eyesight has always been a bit crap. So, not perfect, but much better than for the last year and no infections or complications so I'll settle for that.

It did feel like a pause in the out of the house thing, I had to rest because of the operation and then I pulled a muscle badly enough to need a physio, which meant that we got to spend a little time at home. One aspect of house sitting is that we get to see how other people live and see how they setup the flow of their house. Some flows I can live without but the house in Timaru on the south island had lovely outdoor seating area that we used every day so we

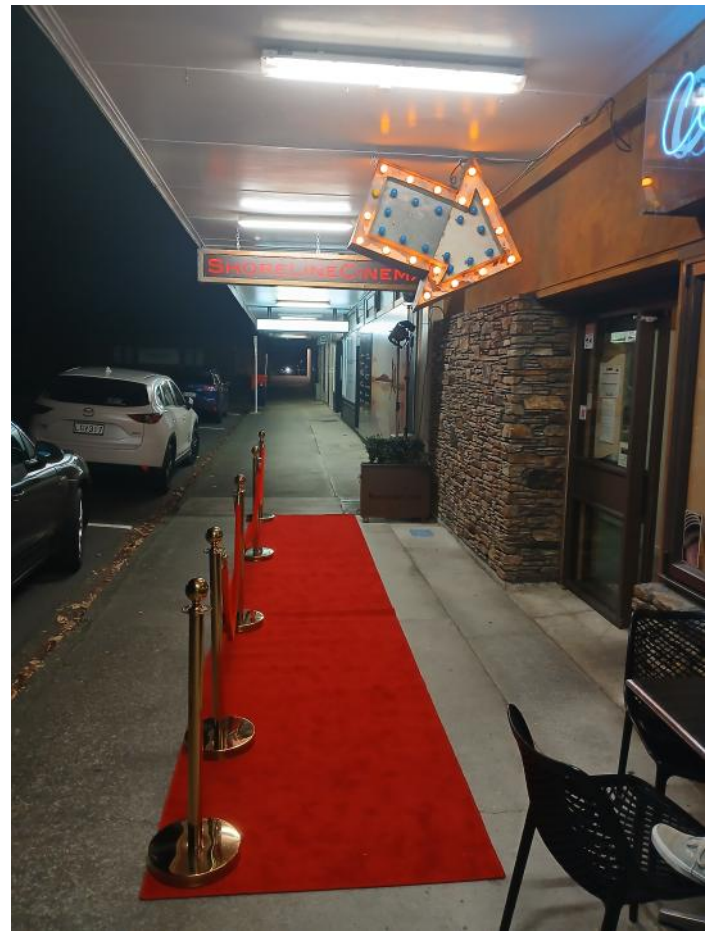
thought we might try and see if we could recreate something like it. It's a big project so we have just started, we have the wood and we have removed the clothes line that would be in the way and we bought a new clothes line, as the DIY store was having a flash sale, and concreted in the pole. As they were having a sale



Steph bought a new toy, a saw table. It looks fearsome and dangerous but Steph seems to know how to use it without removing limbs.

The other thing that happened at this time was that we finally got our tax sorted out. We have been trying to file for over six months now and finally it is all sorted, the accountant described the bill as “significant but not catastrophic”, so - deep breaths. To celebrate this and also to continue my physio we had a lovely weekend yoga retreat, with added gym and swimming pool. It was lovely and felt like summer's final outing.

We even got some time for socializing, we went to our local cinema on a Saturday night, and they were having a red carpet world premiere event. I hardly recognized the usher with her brand new blonde hair and she said she hardly recognized us as she usually sees us in our cycling kit on a Tuesday. The film was a local film, very local; it was shot around us



on the Kapiti Coast called “The People We Love”. It was super fun to be able to recognize the beach access paths and the houses and the film was fine but I suspect it will not be causing a splash in the UK any time soon.

We have been playing Pandemic Legacy which is a board game that changes and evolves as you play it. Its designed only to be played in total once, having said that the total game is broken down into months some of which we needed to play multiple times, we started last July and we have just finished. We won, sort of. We played together as a team and we saved the world, well South America was a bit of a wasteland and you probably would not want to visit North America but Europe and Asia were OK, mostly. We scored just over 600 that roughly translates as

“well, not everyone died”.

So now the nights are drawing in, we need to leave. We have taken the netting off the fig tree as the crop has been picked (30Kg this year). We are flying north for the winter/summer (depending on your viewpoint). We have not been back for a couple of years so it will be interesting to see how everyone is getting along and maybe we can continue Steph’s idea of painting, packing and DIYing while we are away.

