

Everything Has Been Arranged (or, Chamomile Tea at Ten Thousand Feet)

by Marshall Moore

The building ejects my condominium like an enormous videocassette. Maybe this explains why the landscaping crew trimmed the hedges yesterday afternoon. Although the movers told me to strap everything down, everything rattles, including my nerves.

I quickly boil water for tea. Boxes smell like old sawdust and they're hell on my sinuses. The brochure said to leave nothing on shelves, nothing on the walls. My library sleeps in a cardboard coma. All my bric-a-brac naps in wadded newspaper. The tick-tock of my wall clock sounds like a bomb about to go off. Maybe I didn't need to put it between the sofa cushions for safekeeping. I started packing two weeks ago and have been sneezing nonstop ever since. Imagine inhaling a pincushion. Chamomile tea helps. It takes the edge off. Drink enough of it and you get a little overcast, a little lethargic. Outside, the property manager stands next to the foreman of the moving crew, holding an immense remote control unit. The mechanism inside my building operates more or less smoothly and quietly, but that sense of being expectorated by architecture upsets me. I'm careful not to fill the cup too full; wouldn't want to scald a finger if the water sloshes.

Tottering towers of boxes dominate the inside wall of this room. I own too many books. My cat Angus screeches like the teakettle did, and dives for cover under the sofa. The condo gives a lurch, and Angus hisses. No boxes tumble. It's a miracle of gravity and balance.

My tea stays inside the cup, too, but needs to steep longer. I'm looking for a deeper shade of yellow.

Outside, the moving company has assembled an enormous pallet in the parking lot. The hydraulic winch lowers my apartment squarely in the center. Thick chains strain skyward. The zeppelin is the size of how many football fields?

I wonder if I'll become airsick. Green isn't my color. Can I open the windows for fresh air or will birds fly in and wreck everything? I can picture myself chasing sparrows and eagles around my kitchen with a broom. With my luck, I'll trip over the straps that anchor my furniture in place. Maybe Angus will catch the birds for me and eat them. When I look outside again, the foreman catches my eye and holds up both hands with his palms toward me, fingers apart. He mouths the words *ten minutes*.

Immense possibilities hang beyond the horizon. It's that sort of moment. Or maybe I'm being dramatic, because the zeppelin has blocked out the sun. Shadows make life seem more mysterious than it really is. Someday, long after this, maybe I will feel settled. Moving is draining and stressful, even at ten thousand feet. Angus hisses again. If he could talk, I suspect he would agree.

Outside, someone shouts, *Clear!*

And with an awful rocket-thrust elevator heave, we ascend. If the future is a toy box, the present is a couch. How often do people move house without leaving home? What if we encounter turbulence? I command myself to relax and enjoy the flight. The tea is ready, but I'm not.

