

HEROINES
By
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Lives around me are changing. One friend is packing it in and leaving upstate New York for Atlanta, Georgia. Another has just sold practically everything she owns, settled in a much smaller space and opted for a more centered life in New York City.

I am as happy for them as I am envious of their courage. They have chosen change for themselves, glimpsed into their own futures and made decisions about what right for them. They have direction and are willing to face the risks of the unknown. They know, that for them, at this time, it is the right thing to do. They have taken control and assumed their rightful place as the central power in their lives.

I listen and observe their joy and transformation. I am depressed because I can't move. As mistress of my fate, I preside over a ten room split level, with a two car garage and a full basement. Much of the space is filled with things of dubious value. Objects which may, or may not invoke the memory of the giver and/or the occasion stand as sentries on the shelves or have been packed away in cardboard tombs. Some of them have never been used and others may never be used again. I have always found it difficult to throw things out. And, because I have not yet run out of space, my collection of stuff continues to grow.

I have found that rare periodic cleansings must be done by emotionally uninvolved parties, who must make decisions and ignore my facial expressions and groans. Quick hands must be authoritative if they are to release my hold on shreds of disintegrating paper filled with the notes and memories of my first years in college or my feeble attempts at recording those first days and weeks of my oldest child's life. On the last clean-up, my daughter, without my involvement, vowed to clean up my work area. With efficiency that made me proud, she did a great job. My desk was inhabitable once again, papers neatly filed in boxes according to topic. It is almost a year and the boxes remain exactly where she left them, contents virtually undisturbed.

Change. Professionally, I feel change is essential for progress, learning and development. Personally, it is a different story. I never change my furniture around. I am annoyed when things wear out and have to be replaced. It is so bad that even junk mail can sit on my counter for a month before being tossed and catalogs can sit around for two or more seasons just in case. Straightening my closets means I move clothes from the active wear closet in my room to the semi-active closet in the guest room to the in-active closet in the storage room to the bags for the homeless. And, the things I really like, well, I have kept them in the back of the seasonal closet, vitually undisturbed. Clearly, I have problem.

Letting go. Things. Stuff. The accumulation of a lifetime. The familiarity. The memories. The implied security. My unsuccessful attempt to maintain a life that was and is no more. I cling to the illusion of security while attempting to face reality and establish an emotional foothold. Loss. Lost. Last. Cast. Cant. Rant. Rang. Bang!

I am envious of the life simplification process that I have not yet been able to conjure on the same scale as my friends. It is easy to justify but it all boils down to the fact that I am not ready. I am still working on building a foundation for myself, trying to believe that this new and different life has a purpose that will be revealed and with it, a passion and a dedication to something meaningful and spiritual. But, as of now, I am afraid I will throw out something that I need, that I will never find again, that will be gone from my life forever, that I will miss and mourn as a result of a quick and thoughtless decision.

Mourn things? Wait a minute, where is my perspective? Things can be replaced, bought and sold, duplicated or re-invented. Memories hold out as long as the mind is intact. It is not the things, in and of themselves, but what they represent. And what they represent is the past; that which is no more and those who are no more. I can attest to the fact that things do not fill the holes created by the absence of people we care about. Still, knowing all this, I have not moved. Seduced by the appearance of stability, duped or doped (a matter of opinion) by a silent wish that if things remain as they were, my life will be as it was, I remain filled with anger that it will never be so.

On the other hand, this new and current life, forged by a primal instinct to survive, lodged deep within my psyche, occasionally shows possibilities. I face a heretofore unknown freedom. I am both frightened and exhilarated at the same time. I find myself taking baby steps to obtain a balance in my life that maximizes and challenges my sense of self and establishes both emotional and physical order.

My friends share their new experiences with me. They seem to have freed themselves from whatever was holding them back. They disentangled themselves from that which no longer had meaning for them. Right or wrong, easy or not, permanent or transient, they are not intimidated by life. They have found the wherewithal to face it head on, on their own terms, and in their own time.

In this day and age there is no lack of heroines, they are all around us. From everyday survival to forging inroads on all fronts, in all avenues of life, they inspire us to persevere and seek what is best in ourselves and for ourselves.