

## Saying Goodbye to Espirit

First of all, please do not take this as a command and go around leaping into shrubbery, you may upset someone, and some of those plants are prickly!

Espirit and I went out for an amble around the property. With her being unwell, we take time to look at things, and move slowly. This is our time, and I guard it jealously, as any precious commodity should be... She has taught me, a fair student of the Bush, more than I can acknowledge...

It had just finished raining, and the air and trees had a hard, bright look to them, as if they had been newly made. The wild flowers are all out now, the Scarborough Lillies are waving their pink trumpets about a foot of the ground, they carry their heads about like someone who has had a hard night and only just made it into work...

The Hardenbergia is going crazy and latching onto the young Tuarts with green corkscrew fingers to pull itself up, to display its sprays of tiny bright blue flowers... The Cats Paws are a sudden violent jolt of red, yellow and orange amongst the khaki Veldt Grass, and I find myself wishing that they were taller than their 8 inches off the ground. Espirit has found a patch of Donkey and Spider Orchids that seem to tremble if you look at them, the Donkey Orchids' yellow and brown petals are shaped like a donkey's ears, while the Spider Orchids looks like they have been carved from white plastic that has been shot through with yellow...

Espirit has pointed to a young Bearded Dragon that is sunning itself on a burned Banksia stump, its charcoal and grey camouflage blending perfectly with the charred wood, except for it's obsidian eyes that are locked on us like little black lasers. We were 20 metres from the lizard, and Espirit picked it up, and I start thinking of a Mal as a gun dog.

We get to the back of the property and pause to pay our respects to Breasley, who rests there in a cathedral of Eucalypts that give a green, ever-changing, stained glass window in her honour. We then meet a lady who is walking home next to a large dapple grey horse, she has broken a stirrup leather. Espirit says hello to the horse, and the horse says hello back with a blast of air from it's nose, causing Espirit to frown and to wildly semaphore me with her ears, but she stands her ground, and sniffs back loudly. Checkmate.

We part company and continue our journey, tracks of small creatures plain in the just cleaned sand. Espirit has found something that she will not go near, and, trusting her judgement, the snake stick comes to the fore. She is right again, and a 4-foot Tiger is sent to meet it's ancestors.

As we walk slowly back to the house, I reflect that I must be a cold fish not to be too emotional about saying goodbye to a Great Mate like Espirit, but then I realise that I am doing just that, saying goodbye in small bits, to alleviate the final parting. A bit of self-preservation is in there, too, as I know that if I get too emotional, I will not be able to stop.

Dedicated to Larry and Deborah.

Kindest Regards,  
Andrew Gaynor  
Australia