



It Happened To Me: I Spent A Year In A Hippie Commune

During my last month as a college student, I clipped a posting from the classifieds: "WANTED: Vegetarian Housemate for Farmhouse Collective."

I called the number, and was told the farmhouse had been in the same remote spot on State Route 208 since the 1800s, and was now full of eccentrics -- all vegetarian or vegan, who shared books on a communal shelf and enjoyed the plentiful outdoor space.

There weren't any neighbors close by, just the puffed-up turkeys on the lawn and the raccoons in the trash bins. Behind the house, apple orchards. A pond to one side, a skydiving ranch to the other. Every weekend, people in colored jumpsuits would fall from above like flung crayons.

I moved in shortly after shedding my cap and gown.

The farmhouse was fifteen minutes away from the nearest laundromat, pharmacy, or restaurant. I hoped that being cloistered away from civilization would make the farmhouse its own hippie island, inspiring those of us who lived there to form an open and meaningful community.

The autumn air smelled like apples and burning leaves.

My room was the smallest in the house -- a glorified walk-in closet. Enough square footage to hold a mattress and box spring, a footlocker full of clothes, a pile of notebooks, and a couple of jadeite bowls holding pens and necklaces. I paid \$350 a month.

In the other rooms: a man I called Rumpelstiltskin -- an aging hippie with tales from the original Woodstock. Two dreadlocked undergrads who worked part-time as door-to-door fundraisers for the environment, whose rooms smelled memorably of sweat and cannabis. The zydeco musician with a glittering pink accordion who got evicted two days after moving in for peeing naked by the road. A graduate oil painter at the nearby college who scarcely appeared in the farmhouse, which was a shame, because we had a few good conversations. And our keeper, Daisy, a tattooed ex-artist and militant vegan who seemed to live entirely off the jars of almond butter she'd eat each night with a spoon.

(Source : JENNIFER CLEMENTS , SEP 1, 2014

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