

Why the country is no place for a single woman

Staying with friends is fantastic – except when it reminds you of the life you could have had

By Katie Glass 19 December 2020 • 6:00am



Katie's move to her friend Tanya's family abode isn't quite what she had in mind... CREDIT: Jooney Woodward

To lose your fiancé and become homeless during a pandemic may be regarded as a misfortune; but it is sheer carelessness to move into your friend's rose-covered farmhouse with her perfect husband and cheeky son so you can confront how badly your own life has gone wrong.

Right before I last bought a home, my flat in London, I also lived with Tanya. Her son was a toddler then. In the mornings he'd crawl into the study where I slept, on a mattress under a desk, and plonk himself down on my head. Now he is seven and runs around the garden firing arrows, shouting times tables and attending Beavers via Zoom. Yet somehow, in the time that has elapsed, I have still not grown up. I am back to being single and sleeping in his playroom on a broken sofa bed.

I always had a fantasy that if I left my fiancé, and London, I'd move to a high-rise apartment in New York – write for The Village Voice, go drinking in Williamsburg and explore the Upper East

Side on weekends. I did not picture myself [in a tiny village in Cornwall](#) being woken up by a child dancing to YMCA at 7am.

Tanya and Andrew live like *The Good Life* if it was set in a fishing port and Barbara was played by an angry Jewish woman. Andrew, Tanya's husband, is a Tory-voting stand-up comedian (it is hard to tell if his politics is part of his act), who spends his days looking after the chickens and baking bread in the Aga while Tanya furiously tweets about feminism.

I hear them fighting in bed over who'll do the morning shift and US politics. And catch them kissing over the dishwasher at night. They have the kind of imperfectly perfect relationship that Richard Curtis romcoms are made of.

I, meanwhile, haven't even managed a meet-cute. Because it's Covid times, and they don't drink, I can't even get drunk, go down the pub and snog someone. Instead, I sneak bottles of wine to the boy's tree house, go on Hinge and call my bridesmen. 'It's an adventure!' says Martin. 'Come back to London,' says Rob.

During the first lockdown, in my London flat, I was free to dream days away rewatching *The Wire*, drinking wine and doing Yoga with Adriene. Family life is... different.

Mornings start painfully early with loud singing – either the boy singing songs he's made up about Trump, or Tanya singing Oklahoma! In the Lego-covered playroom where I sleep, there's no space for yoga. Instead, we take family walks, dragging the boy screaming around fields.

When I lived alone, meals involved wandering to the fridge at midnight. Here we eat dinner at 5pm. I have not seen so many shepherd's pies since I was six. We eat freshly baked challah, rice puddings and Sunday roasts. I put on a stone. And get depressed. Even with Tanya's hugs and bridesmen constantly calling, I feel painfully alone. I worry that in the family rhythm of country life, there is no place for a single woman.

I distract myself learning about air-source heat pumps, how to run radiators off an Aga and watching YouTube videos about keeping pigs. Meanwhile the conveyancing drags on and it's clear I won't be in for Christmas.

Then one day I wake up from a nightmare in which I am being eaten alive by a pig and decide it's time to act. I need to establish a new life here for myself. I need purpose, and friends, and to go on a date.

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