

## Legacy and Drips

When I awoke in the morning, the kitchen was filled with dishes. I didn't have a dishwasher, and the counter tops and drying rack were piled high. There were traces of the night before, sticky bowls and cigarette ashes in little cups that I would have to fish out with my finger. I quickly unloaded the rack and pushed the plates and cups into the sink. They left behind puddles of water, cold and foggy. I always notice that once the dishes are clean, all the kitchen surfaces are dirty.

At breakfast I asked Kevin and Antonia, who had stayed over, if they still followed any leftover practices from their time in the cult. Both had been brought up in separate communes, in separate parts of the country, which had both inevitably cascaded towards something charismatic, then captivating, then forced.

"No, not really," Kevin said, quickly. "Baking," he went on, the word falling out of his mouth with a thud. "And I must have consistently healthy and consistently balanced meals. But that's normal." "No," said Antonia, and then thought about the question for another moment. "If there's not a green vegetable on the plate, spinach, kale, Swiss chard, broccoli" she continued, "I become very nervous. There's clearly something missing, right?"

Antonia went back to eating her breakfast, pancakes with circular slices of apple, peeled, floating like little islands. Something green was noticeably missing from the table, and I felt irresponsible. Had I ungenerously pushed her backwards, into an empty spot? She told me once before about taking care of horses as a child, and how that had brought her great pride and identification: these are my horses; this is my place. Now she was thousands of miles away, she wrote poems and went for long walks, and the horses had been sold years ago to a neighboring farm.

We cleared the dishes together, and then Kevin and Antonia packed their belongings and caught their bus home. After I washed the plates and cups again I looked around the empty apartment. I looked at the scratches and dark spaces I had rubbed onto the walls in the past two years; that visitors had left behind. Most of the spots on the molding were from shoes and from jackets dropped on the floor; some were from moving furniture around. I had always had the luxury to live alone, and though I never considered myself to be interested in material things, I had begun to accumulate a certain pride in what this space offered. I sometimes felt naughty, that I was asking questions that were difficult to escape from. I was a people catcher, and these people, my people, were sensitive people.

When Antonia had told me about the commune the night before, she said it was always going to come apart because the farm had to be taken care of, the mortgage paid off, the children sent to school, or at least home-schooled. "They didn't realize what they were signing up for", Antonia said about her parents. "They wanted to invest in another way of living. By the end they had to hire a lawyer to evict the remaining members off our land."

"At least you learned to cook and write and ride horses," I had offered. "I learned everything there," Antonia said. "I mean it was like a leaky faucet. It drives you nuts at first, but then you get used to it, and feel unnerved when the drip drip is gone." I thought that was odd, the drip drip was what made everyone nervous, right?

I looked out the window and saw the train tracks with the trains coming from the airport. The train passing then was long, perhaps 13 or 14 cars, and made a loud whirring sound, reaching towards a screech, before it moved out of sight with a salutatory clack clack. The tracks were empty for a moment, nothing there, no kick back, no leftovers. I moved away from the windows and back into the warm interior of my home.