

# HOUSE

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## my hudson valley

### TINKER STREET EPIPHANY

*Caught by the warm and fuzzies.*

**A**re you from the area?" the beautician at the Emerson Inn spa asked me while I was getting a facial. It felt presumptuous to tell her I was. My husband and I had traded a Manhattan studio apartment for a 4-bedroom house in West Hurley only eight months before.

Not long after 9/11, our nerves still raw and rattled, we took our newborn daughter up to a Woodstock bed and breakfast for a weekend respite from the tense city. As we strolled through Tinker Street, we were dazzled by the House For Sale flyers, and got a bad case of the warm and fuzzies. We had an epiphany. The Hudson Valley could be a great place to raise a family and reinvent ourselves. I could become a yoga instructor. A city business owner, my husband envisioned opening up a café somewhere. That weekend ignited a two-year quest for the perfect house.

House hunting was very romantic at first, but I quickly discovered that my husband's fear of commitment, as evidenced by our five-year courtship, stretched into real estate. Besides that, our tastes clashed—I saw romance and nostalgia in 1970s capes with yellow bathroom tiles; my husband loved the grandeur of long, meandering, hidden driveways and endless acres of land. ("Acreage is an ego thing with men," warned my sister-in-law. "Don't get sucked into it.") I didn't mind living among the black bears, as long as a neighbor would be within screaming distance.

Promiscuous house shoppers, we were a broker's nightmare, cheating on our "main squeeze" agent with a virtual harem of others. I stopped using my real name at open houses.

After a year of fruitless weekend house-hunting trips, which included a brief infatuation with a fixer-upper that we bid on but backed out of after a failed house inspection, we decided to rent a house from November to May in Woodstock to make sure we liked the area enough to commit.

There were low points—the time I slipped on black ice while carrying my one-year-old daughter, and the time I saw a mouse skipping behind our landlady's ceramic plates—but at the end of our lease, we were still in love with the area.

As the snow finally melted, we saw a pleasant ranch in move-in condition. Weeks later, I couldn't get it out of my head, and two months later we finally made one broker happy. Is it okay to say that I'm from the area? I hope so, because I'm starting to feel like I am.

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