

MY LIFE IN A BEDSIT

It's said, if you remember the 60s you weren't there. I remember the 60s all too well.

I worked in London and hated the daily commute from my home in the suburbs where I still lived with my parents.

One day I spotted a notice in a shop window advertising a room to let in Kinnerton Street. I asked around at work and a colleague said it was a fabulous turning behind Harrods and that I should definitely take a look.

The street was charming, lined with quaint cottages and even a tiny pub. As I arrived at the house, four good looking young men carrying guitars were coming out of the front door. A band. Wow! Without even seeing the room I knew this was where I wanted to live!

The room to let was a bedsit just a few steps up from the front door. It was smaller than my room at home and barely furnished. Hidden behind a sliding door was a small sink. Upstairs there was a shared bathroom and kitchen. The cost would be almost what I was earning every month. But I was so smitten with the idea of living there that I decided to take it.

My father helped me move in. When I had told my parents I wanted to move out they had seemed disappointed but had not tried to dissuade me. It's not home, was all my father said when he saw it.

I met my neighbours. On the ground floor lived a balding bachelor, whose room smelt of damp washing and socks. On the first floor there was a chef who worked in a London restaurant. I salivated to the smell of his steak cooking as I tucked into my nightly meal of yoghurt and grated apple – all I could afford after I had paid my rent. Nothing would persuade me to enter the kitchen after I had seen a mouse feasting on cheese in the fridge. The bathroom wasn't much better. Years of grime had stained the bath and no amount of elbow grease would remove it.

On the other floors lived a homosexual couple and a spinster. I envied the other residents their large rooms – mine was a cubby hole in comparison. I was on the same floor as the telephone which meant I was always answering phone calls for others.

Where was the band? Where were the four young men I had seen on my first visit? Gone. Kicked out for loud and lewd behaviour. I was devastated.

Living in a bedsit did not live up to my dreams. It was great to be able to walk home from work along Piccadilly and around Hyde Park Corner to Knightsbridge. But there was no one to enjoy it with me. I was alone and lonely.

In the end, I could bear it no longer and phoned home. My dad came to collect me. You were right, I said to him. It's not home.

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Notes

Back in the 60s if you were a single woman you were called a spinster and a single man was known as a bachelor. Nor did we have the word "gay" for homosexuals back then.

*"If you remember the 60s you weren't there".
This quote has been attributed to a number of people including Robin Williams, Pete Townshend (The Who) and Timothy Leary. It implies that the drugs/alcohol/sex/love-ins and general insanity of the period permanently impaired the memory of those who actually experienced the 1960s!*