



## Got a place in NYC!

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Your apartment is a studio designed for hobbits. The room could't be cozier. The view is breathtaking. You can see into other people's living rooms. Welcome to the City.

You can toast. You finally found a decent ad on Craigslist, contacted your new housemate by email and paid the first month's rent through Western Union. Now you have a home in New York City. The excitement, though, lasts till you actually see it. When a brisk taxi driver kicks you out of the cab in front of your new building, you are not too impressed. A team of rats dances joyfully around the garbage bags. A snobby bunch of raccoons stares at you, as if your European look was rather funny. You realize that the door lock has been picked a considerable number of times. Plus, nobody has ever bothered to repaint the interior walls of the building.

Your apartment is a studio designed for hobbits. Your room, as pointed out in the ad, is cozy. It



couldn't be cozier. It's no more than 32 square feet. A white fan covered in dust is on a twin size mattress laid on the floor. The mattress is wrapped in olive-colored sheets. You take a closer look and establish that they used to belong to the previous roomie. Naturally, nobody took a stab at washing them. The window, one of your main concerns, is there. It is a narrow rectangle covered with a Venetian blind. The view is breathtaking. You can see into other people's living rooms. Just 60 feet separate your pillow from the couch of a bold individual who frantically bangs on the keyboard of his laptop, from a woman who chews carrots, from a guy with a baseball cap surrounded by empty Budweiser cans. As for the door, you realize you weren't as lucky as with the window. You have no door. Instead, there's a bright red cloth that is sometimes lifted up by your housemate as he makes period trips to "the office", the toilet. The bathroom reveals other problems. Problems it would be inelegant to mention them here. But just imagine that a colony of beetles has elected it as their adopted land, and the toilet is so tiny you need to be a contortionist not to get stuck. It happens.

Don't despair. It's not so bad. You get the chance to say hi to a next-window neighbor who is in the same situation.

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