

Stuck Singing The Same Old Songs

No one ever spoke of it outside Ulster County, let alone really outside of Woodstock. Souls and stories frozen in time from a year and a movement much bigger than anyone imagined. Almost as if some of it never happened, all of the little parts and people that played into the grandness that was Woodstock. Are all now lost. Both in history and in the now. And are left to be just another story that doesn't need further explanation.

Woodstock was home to not only a stage that welcomed some of the biggest legends within the music world but one of the greatest moments in this nation's history. Coming in by the hundreds of thousands, kids left their lives and worries behind for a weekend of revelations and enchantment. At a time when the nation was divided by the morality of their involvement in the Vietnam War and the racism and segregation that plagued them. An 'Aquarius exposition', where individuals left all they've ever known and gave it all to the music, to the life that was Woodstock.

By flocking to upstate New York, these festival attendees were granted a weekend getaway of an escape from the everyday turmoil that greeted them as an old friend. They were finally given a place, a home, **an answer** to their reckless youth and lively spirits.

And for small town Marylou Hill, who seemed to have all the answers figured out, was only tagging along on a last-minute weekend with some classmates. A weekend of listening to some of their favorite artists, seemed to be exactly what high-strung Marylou needed.

One of her classmates, Brian, reassured her by claiming, "it'll be the transcendental, experimental, spiritual release your body and soul were born for".

Nodding along, Marylou masked her overwhelming anxiety of the foreign experience she'll soon find herself lost in.

I can't even remember the last time I turned the radio on!, she thought to herself.

The past month has been spent prepping towards her arrival in Philadelphia, and a not a moment of it was accompanied by the radio or any of its culture that came with it. Not only raised to think of the music that dominated the radio and FM world as the devil's work, or unlawful; she hasn't ever heard a drop of Rock n Roll, Blues, or Jazz. Born into a southern

Baptist family from Henderson County, Texas, the only music that was ever played for her was that of the Lord's.

And the last song, more like the last hymn, she can remember singing was in Church right before she left for the drive to orientation. Unable to remember the name of it for the past week, only this bit has been on an endless loop,

*Faithful till death said our Loving Master If you more days to labor and wait,
toils of the road will then seem as nothing. As we sweep through this beautiful gate.*

Singing along softly to herself, Marylou made her way through the campus quad in search of her new friends. With her overnight bag slung tight over her shoulder, she was bracing herself for the unknown. Trying to calm her nerves she continued to sing to herself, she tried to quickly refresh her memory with all their names and nicknames..

Robert, Brian, Deborah (Debbie), Debby, William (Willie), William (Billie), Ralph, Margaret (Maggie or Margie, or Margaret, or Mary?), and Margaret (Peggy)

She'll get the hang of it, only being the third day since meeting them, she doubted they even knew her name, only how to give the saddest attempt at their rendition of a southern accent.

Are those seriously the popular names? Everyone named after one another or their mother. No wonder they all look at me as if I'm a four-eyed freak. My name has class. History.

It's common down where Marylou's from, the passing down of family names, holding stories and lives of those before them. Not named after the latest, cutest movie star but after importance.

Never mind that. She thought to herself as she tried to quiet her mind before reaching the group. '3 Days of Peace and Music', she read off the dozens of bright red posters that littered the campus quad. *What does that even truly mean?*, she thought, *We are to reward ourselves peace after work has been done, not just given to anyone.*

And as she made her way out the quad, the serene steadiness of it all was slowly being overtaken by an overbearing humming and blaring of cars and kids. And then chaos ensued.

Bodies rushing all around, shouting for rides, tickets, and drugs. All in a hurry to find their friends, pack their cars, and get on the road. Fighting her way through the masses, Marylou finally made it to the stairs, and was met yet again with a rush of bodies hurrying down.

And none of them carried a bag, or really any evidence that they were embarking on a weekend getaway other than an occasional pillow and blanket.

Their adrenaline and excitement were all they needed for this adventure.

What have I gotten myself into?, she thought, as one of the boys running past threw her a little baggie of whatever kind of drug, followed by a thumbs up and a more passive aggressive than upbeat,

"Lighten up!", followed by grin and a motioning of a lighter. Rolling her eyes, she pushed past a group of six fighting for the last two spots in an already jam-packed car.

"Mar! Over here!", shouted Diana.

Finally finding an opening in the masses, she hurried her way to her new friend Diana. They have WRIT1002 together and both attended church camps growing up, Diana stopped once she started to date. Found the Lord's word to be a bit "cut and dry" on premarital sex. Still,

Marylou looked past that, and her choice of no undergarments, and be thankful for her new friend's hospitality.

Walking up to not only Diana but an old utility van and eight of her friends, Marylou quickly realized it was going to be more than just a weekend listening to some music. All of them were dressed or should I say partially dressed, in the brightest of colors and torn denim. And none with a bag or any indicator of spare clothes.

Making her way around the group with the guidance of Diana, Marylou did the awkward but needed introductions and nods to everyone. As she made her way to the van, one of the side doors was open while all windows were cracked. A sliver of smoke made its way out the window, filling the air around her with this earthy, skunky but sweet smell.

Absent minded looking around the van, she saw picket signs with peace signs and 'End the War!', and 'Freedom to All' outlined with plenty of paint cans stacked around them.

"I can see you creepin' back there ya know. You wanna hit?", a deep voice asked Marylou from the inside of the van. Whipping her head around, her eyes caught those of baby blue gems, barely noticeable under the navy and yellow bandana that lay on top of a mound of tangled blonde hair.

She knew that voice and those eyes, even though she's only been here a week.

Finn.

He was in her orientation group that he only attended for the first minute or so before

lighting a cigarette and sauntering away. And has only seen him since walking back into the dorms early one morning while Marylou went for a morning run. Not really the outgoing type, didn't seem like there was a thing in the world he cared about, especially peace.

Marylou didn't even have the chance to think of some response before he chimed in.

"Didn't think so, a lil doll like you don't need none of this dirty shit. But since you're here and comin' with us, I was startin' to think anything could happen." Finn smiled.

One time wouldn't hurt, would it?

Nooo. No.

"Just one hit." Marylou said quickly, surprising not only Finn but herself too.

Where did that come from??

Finn's smile turned to a smirk as Marylou hesitantly climbed into the van making her

way over to him. Sitting across from him was the first time she really got a good look him. Slim facial features and a high cheekbone, he was a pretty boy on the outside. Only a few scars here and there but nothing too deep to damage. Shakily she reached her hand over to Finns that offered the barely lit joint.

Here goes nothing. And remember to exhale it all out.

The next hour and a half or so was a blur. She took more than one hit from Finn, giggling a little after the first followed by his flirtatious comments and questions. It wasn't long that she came back to reality and realized they were on the road, her in passenger seat and Finn to her left. The back full of the group and some strangers, some were smoking or drinking, a few girls were in the way back painting their signs and one another, and everyone else was just having a good time.

What Marylou didn't realize was that over 400,000 teens and young adult will be congregating for not only this art movement but as a retaliation to their parents' and societies expectations.

Only an hour or so left in their three-hour drive, the group spent the remainder of the ride sharing stories as an attempt to mask the anticipation of the much-awaited extravaganza to commence.

Marylou didn't utter a word.

One of the guys in the back, Brian, went on and on about Jimi Hendrix's stage presence. Glorifying his violent outbursts of breaking or burning all his guitars, that are really him calling out to all the evil in the world.

Marylou didn't buy it. But she also didn't want to egg him on, so she just nodded along and adding in the occasional, "I heard about that!"

Playing guitar as a way to summon evil? I won't be telling my parents of this weekend in my letter next week.

Trying to keep her mind off of Brian and his demonic commentary, Marylou leaned over and turned up the radio a smidge and turned to ask Finn, "where will you put your stuff when we get there? Do we have some sort of base camp we call as ours?"

"Fat chance babe. There's not gonna be any room to park let alone sleep or change in peace. Only belongings I brought with me are the ones you see right now. You don't need nothin but the shoes on your feet" Finn chimed back with a grin.

He can't be serious. This can't be legal then to have this many people here with no guidelines? No safety precautions or even housing?

Just as she was getting all worked up, the car slowed to stop. Hundreds on hundreds of cars lined the grassy roads and up the fields. And bodies weaving in between parked cars, stopping to set up camp or just chat with strangers. No one was in a rush anywhere, and no one was moving anytime soon.

It was almost automatic, someone passing by shouted, "C'mon just walk!", and just like that everyone made their way out of the van and onto the streets. Marylou didn't even think twice, jumping out of her seat and following the crowd of teens, young adults, hippies, college kids, **strangers.**

With nothing in common other than the same destination. Marylou found comfort in the crowd, still alongside Diana, she tried to find Finn who already lost himself in the crowd. Not thinking really anything of it, she kept on passing the hundreds of empty cars that lined the road and nearby neighborhoods.

What seemed like hours would go by and finally they'd reach the field of dreams. Thousands of tents littered the field, flocks of people running all around you, laughing, dancing and singing all together and at once. Not one care in the world, especially not the puddles of mud that already were forming and taking people down by the many.

Quickly on Marylou realized, *this is peace*. Not the traditional awakening she was used to, that's granted to those who are deserving, but rather one that lives in all of us, and is shared through the simply joys of life.

The music didn't begin until the sun had already set and didn't stop till two nights later. Later on during the first night in the early hours of 3am, Marylou heard a song so family sung by Joan Baez.

Farther along we'll know all about it Farther along we'll understand why Cheer up my brothers, live in the sunshine We'll understand it, all by and by

It was the hymn that was stuck in her head all of yesterday! Not realizing until now that there is so much more to the music than what she may have initially thought. Looking around she saw strangers, people of completely different lifestyles and beliefs, singing the same song she swore by in Church.

Slowly she was starting to understand what everyone was going on about in the car.

Finn! Oh man, where has he been?

Not having seen him since they first got there, she started to worry about her whereabouts. Working herself up over him, she tried to remember if he gave any clues where he might be.

Her daydream was quickly cutoff as Diana grabbed her hand and pulled her through the crowd, following a group of war protestors who insisted we joined them for a fire going back at their tent.

"I haven't seen Finn since the car. Have you seen or anyone heard from him? I hope he didn't wander off alone." Marylou shouted to Diana over all the commotion of a 14-hour show winding down.

"Don't worry about him. I'm sure he's fine, probably took some shrooms and went for a walk." She tried to reassure Marylou but none of that helped the uneasiness she felt. Still, she went on, barely knowing the kid, Diana was probably right.

Saturday went by even faster, and not with a single thought of Finn. Marylou kept herself busy by taking up the boy from school's offer of, "lighten up", and had Brian help her roll her first ever joint. Proudly smoking it during Canned Heat, feeling like a true fan next to her peers, she rolled herself a few more Creedence Clearwater Revival and Janis Joplin.

It wasn't until late on Monday morning that Marylou realized Finn was gone, gone. Jimi Hendrix went on around 9am, and she could've sworn Finn would've been back by then. Still she kept it to herself, and prayed over and over again he'd turn up, by the time they made it to the road of cars, she knew.

His van stood there, unmoved, or untouched since we all climbed out. The windows still down even, and now the seats ruined from the storm the day prior. All the signs and paint still scattered in the back. Everything was still there, keys included, but no Finn.

People started shouting out his name in hopes he was just a few cars down, a little lost or still drunk, but they all secretly knew.

Marylou knew it first, and all along. Tied around the back of her headrest was the torn up navy blue and yellow bandana that once rested on Finn. In shock of how it got there, the last she saw it he had it on and outside of the car, she knew.

Slowly untying it, Marylou drew as little as attention to not freak the group out. As she unraveled the grimy cloth, a ripped-up piece of paper fell out.

"The music never stops, you just gotta keep lookin'."

No one ever heard or saw Finn again. No one even knows if he ended up even going into the festival or wandered off someplace else. But he wasn't the only one.

Marylou couldn't accept his goodbye and needed an answer, a reason why he went all this way to run away from it all. So she went on her own, went back up a week later and started asking the locals if they'd seen anything or hear anything of his sorts. All that searching came up dry. It wasn't until years later she posted on an online forum looking for loved ones, did she find herself in a rabbit hole of past Woodstock goers, all who returned with one person short. And all left with the same note.

So Marylou did what Finn wrote, she kept lookin'.