

Anthology: My Summer of Yes – 650 Words

Elizabeth Pimentel

Roommates: True Stories of Cohabitation, Confrontation, and Cooperation

September 14, 2026

When I was 20 in 1970 I had my summer of Yes. Educated by Catholic nuns and raised in a conservative, religious family, I'd lived a childhood of many "No's." Residing in a dorm at NYU's Bronx campus for three years came with more rules about what not to do. When I finally moved into the "garden apartment" (read: "basement") of a nearby tenement, I had the freedom to make my own decisions. I didn't say No to anything—not even to working the graveyard shift at the Post Office.

I was excited to be rooming with my two best girlfriends. We each had our own bedroom, a shared living room, tiny kitchen, eating area, and bathroom. All for \$120 a month split three ways.

One roommate paid her share, but her room was empty until late August when she finally moved in. The other enrolled at UC Berkeley for the summer and asked if I would sublet her room to save her paying rent.

When the previous renter, Joe, moved out, he mentioned having a friend, Max, who needed a summer rental.

"Yes!" I enthusiastically agreed. "Max can move in."

When Max came through the door he announced proudly, "When I told my dad I was moving into your apartment, he said, 'Son, you're quite the stud!'"

An engineering student, Max was the poster child for what you'd expect one to look like back then. He had cropped, slicked-back hair, dressed in white short-sleeve, button-down, breast-pocket shirts with plastic pocket protector holding pens and pencils, and wore black-framed glasses and baggy chinos. My boyfriend David was the polar opposite with his shoulder-length hair, tank-tops, and bell-bottom jeans. Max was definitely not my type.

"It's just for the summer," I rationalized. "What could go wrong?"

I also had some non-human roommates—besides the cockroaches, which were plentiful. Before David left for Europe in June, he asked me to watch his ginger Tomcat Clarence and his calico Josephine along with two orange tabbies he'd gifted me for the new apartment. He'd be gone a month.

"Yes," I said eagerly. "I love cats."

Before long, Josephine delivered a litter of nine of Clarence's offspring on my closet floor. But David was coming back soon, and would take them off my hands, right? A postcard arriving in August told me otherwise.

I'd suddenly become a crazy cat-lady with thirteen cats!

Around eleven at night I'd take the subway downtown to punch-in on the time-clock at Grand Central Station Post Office by midnight. I'd work until eight in the morning when I'd go home and sleep.

This worked well—until one day I was let off at two AM because the Post Office didn't have enough work for everyone. I rode the subway uptown, walked through the South Bronx to

my apartment, and was relieved to let myself in. When I opened my bedroom door, I was shocked. There was Joe, the prior renter, with a woman, lying in **my** bed.

“What are you doing?” I demanded—knowing the answer.

Joe got up and walked me to the living room.

“Please, can you sleep on the couch?” he pleaded. “Max said it was OK.”

“Yes,” I said, too dumbfounded to argue.

So there I was on the sofa, with nine kittens and four other felines crawling over me.

Next day, fuming, I reprimanded a contrite Max. “No, it’s NOT OK to let Joe have sex in my bed!”

I eventually found homes for the kittens. When David returned he was unhappy with my losing Clarence, the ginger Tom, who escaped through the kitchen window. I’m sure Clarence caused the sudden uptick in orange-colored cats in the neighborhood.

By the end of summer I was done sharing my apartment with studs—both four-legged and two—and one whose father thinks he’s one.

More importantly, I’d learned a lifelong lesson: Sometimes you have to say, “No!”

BIO:

Elizabeth Pimentel is a physical therapist and has been an adjunct lecturer in neuroanatomy at the City University of New York and Columbia University Medical Schools. For thirty-five years she honed her writing skills by trying hard to prepare lectures that were understandable, concise, and engaging for students of physical therapy, occupational therapy and medicine. When she became an empty-nester ten years ago, she started writing personal essays to find closure to unresolved issues, hoping others might be able to relate. As a freelance writer, she's been



published in the *Washington Post*, the *New York Daily News*, *Salon* and elsewhere. She and her husband live in The Bronx, where they raised three boys. She's currently writing a memoir about driving a cab in the 1970s.

Facebook: Elizabeth Pimentel

X: @epimentel111