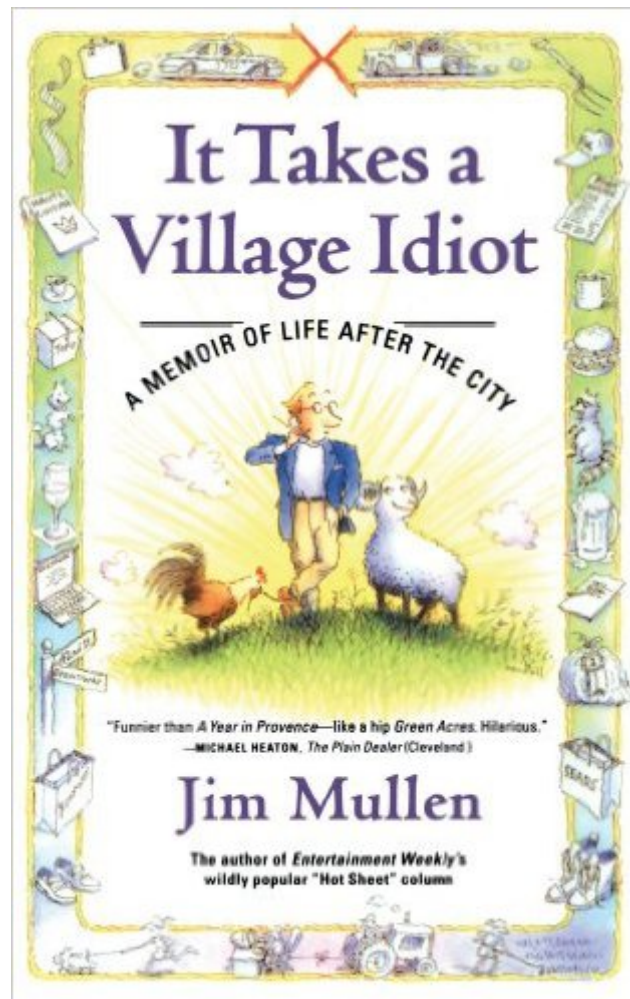


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It Takes A Village Idiot: A Memoir Of Life After The City



Synopsis

Finalist for the 2001 Thurber Prize for American Humor a Rocky Mountain News (Denver) Best Book of the Year Millions of people dream of abandoning the city routine for a simple country life. Jim Mullen was not one of them. He loved his Manhattan existence: parties, openings, movie screenings. He could walk to hundreds of restaurants, waste entire afternoons at the Film Forum, people-watch from his window. Then, one day, calamity. His wife quits smoking and buys a weekend house in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York -- in a tiny town diametrically opposed to Manhattan in every way. Slowly, however, the man who once boasted, "Life is just a cab away," begins to warm to the place -- manure and compost and strangers who wave and all -- and to embrace the kind of life that once gave him the shakes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Journalist Jim Mullen presents this delightfully droll look at the culture clash that ensues when a couple of longtime Manhattanites (the author and his wife) buy a rundown farmhouse in upstate New York. The opening chapters feature plenty of laughs as Mullen very self-consciously details his disdain for the country and its manifold flaws, all in good fun, of course. Speaking as a typical New Yorker, Mullen suggests that, "Upstate is to New York City what Canada is to the United States - a great, empty space to the north that most people are quite happy to know nothing about". But after his wife gives up smoking and decides she needs something to do with her hands, Mullen dutifully accompanies her to "a town that looks as if the Unabomber were the head of the planning board" and their new dream house in the country. Its dilapidated condition comes as quite a shock to its

unwilling owner: "The bathroom combined all the worst features of Appalachian and European plumbing in one convenient spot. Why they brought this toilet indoors one can only guess. Keeping up with the Clampetts, no doubt". The friendly neighbors, the silent nights, the desultory dress code, the local shopping alternatives all hit our new homeowner like the smell of the fresh cow manure. But Mullen's story is by no means one-sided: as his wife succeeds in dragging him off to the country on a more and more frequent basis, we see our narrator undergo a fascinating transformation. Having learned the sagacity of country customs, his barbs turn against the ignorant city-dwellers, who he now sees are just as provincial in their own way. The humorous highlight here is when some friends from the City come to visit for a weekend, providing the denouement to a running joke about turning the barn into a guest house.

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