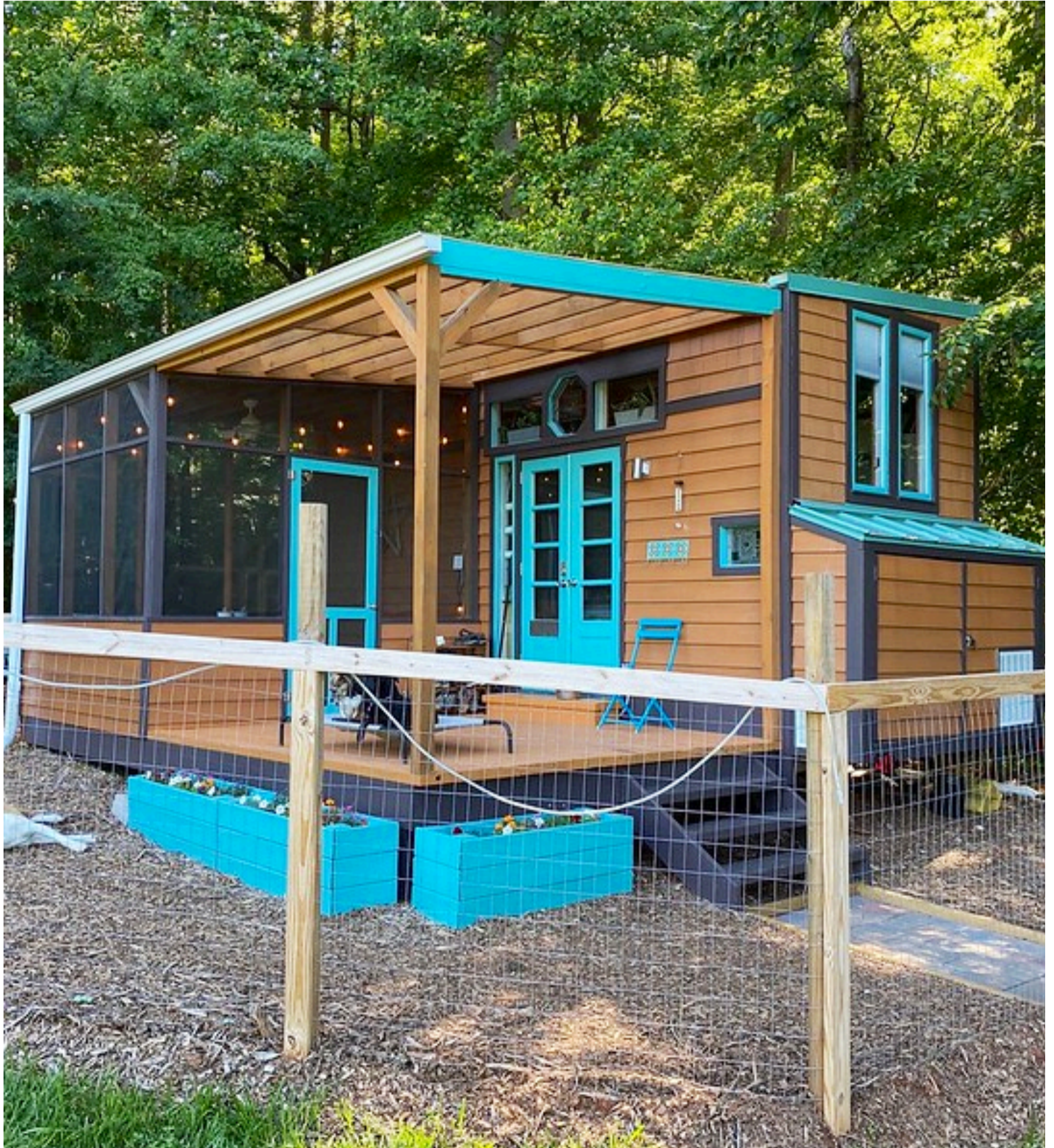


A Tiny House Blog Publication

# TINY HOUSE

FOR MICRO, TINY, SMALL, AND UNCONVENTIONAL HOUSE ENTHUSIASTS

[www.tinyhousemagazine.co](http://www.tinyhousemagazine.co)



VOLUME 8 :: ISSUE 90



A photograph of a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a dirt path leading into the woods. The trees are mostly deciduous with green leaves, and the path is a mix of dirt and fallen leaves. The lighting is soft, suggesting a slightly overcast day or late afternoon. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

# CABIN IN THE WOODS

WRITTEN BY :: MEGHAN MARSDEN



"I'm missing it," I complained.

Childhood comes in sets of five years. Each set is brief, and you only get four of them. Any mother that has given birth, blinked, and found kindergarten upon her, knows what I mean. Birth to age five is a distinct stage of childhood. The days and nights last forever, but those years sure fly by. Age five to ten brings the early school years, first playdates, and birthday parties. Our best camping years arrived between ten and fifteen. Age fifteen to twenty, arguably, doesn't even belong to the parent. Whatever time your child gifts you, especially after they gain the ability to drive away, is just that, a gift. That's all you get: four sets of five years.

My children are all past their first decade. The days we have left to share are more than half over. Apparently, I blinked, and blinked again, and the time flew away.

"Then stop missing it," he suggested over breakfast.

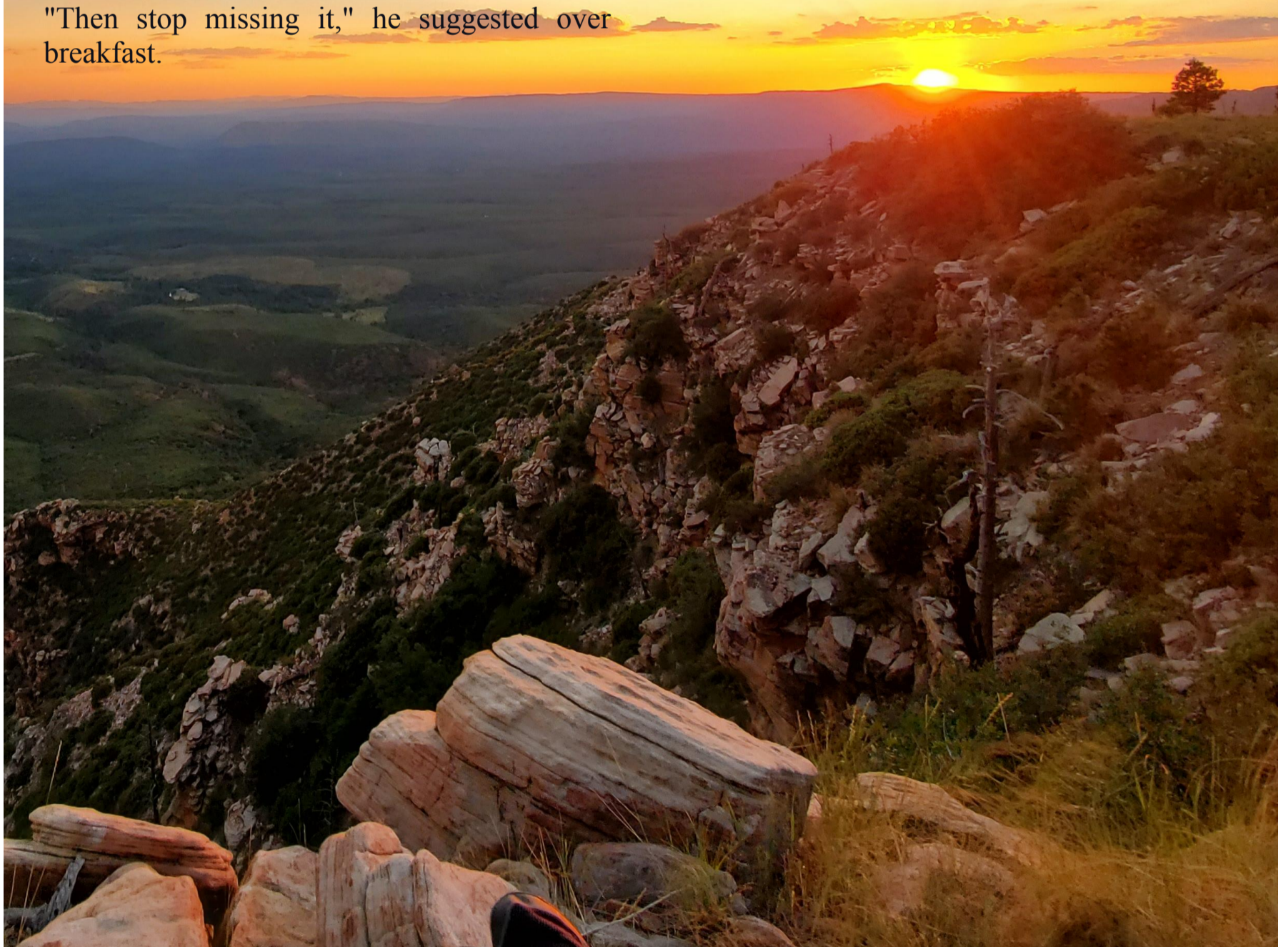
"I could downsize the house."

As though it were that simple. I have kids. They have lives: sports, school, friends, lessons, and on and on. I have a dog that goes to daycare. How could we possibly sell our two-story, vaulted ceiling, Italian travertine, five-bedroom family super-home? We have a water slide. A sport court. The pooch has a dog run. We *live* here.

"Why not?" he replied.

*Why not?*

Were we ready for our daily routine to undergo a drastic financial reset? I was. My children have plenty of *stuff*; we're American. The only family resource that begs to be reallocated is time. It is our most valuable asset and I wanted more.





So, I put the house on the market, and just like that, I stopped working for the electric, water, and natural gas companies, the WiFi gods, the cleaning ladies, and the landscapers. Smaller house, here we come.

Enter now, Covid-19: world pandemic. A 125-nanometer Viron grabbed the game board and threw all of the pieces into the air. The kids were suddenly out of school. Across the country, work hours were reduced. There was no backing out of our home sale, nor did I want too.

However, it is one thing to sell a house during a pandemic and another thing to buy one. I needed time to see what the market was doing. More than that, we needed a place to hole up and wait it out. We needed interim housing.

"You could live up at the cabin," he suggested over breakfast.

"That's crazy."

My father built our cabin when I was six years old, nearly forty years ago. I remember camping out of the family van as he and various friends constructed it from the dirt up. They learned from one another as they went, without the aid of YouTube or "the Google." While the house was still in framing, my father put a mattress on a sheet of plywood and suspended it from the roof trusses. My brother and I slept there, under a field of stars. It was a sad day for me when the roof finally went up.

I don't think any photographs survived from that period except the ones I took with my heart. I can still hear my dad laughing, and the clink of beer bottles as the adults sat around the campfire late into the night. My father passed away when my kids were scarcely bigger than toddlers. They don't remember him.

The cabin was meant as a weekend retreat, a hunting lodge, a place to get away. No one ever thought of *living* there. There is running water that must be hauled from the well, then transferred into an underground storage tank. It has two bedrooms with a bathroom in between. An additional room functions as a combined kitchen and family room. That's four rooms total for two adults, three boys deep in the heart of puberty, and a ridgeback mutt who fancies himself a lion hunter.

It's an hour and a half from a grocery store and a helicopter ride to the nearest hospital. The post office is an out-house sized building next to the service station, where we buy marshmallows and extra water when we run out. Other than a community church and the firehouse and ranger station, there isn't anything for miles. The population is a bit south of five hundred. I would guess there are only about twenty-five full-time residents who are mostly retired.

I love it there. It feeds my soul. But could all five of us, including three kids and a dog, live there?

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"You don't have to drive the kids to school," he reasoned, "You can write anywhere. It's *free*."

"It's not a bad idea."

I loved this low budget proposal for togetherness. A rustic cabin in the woods is not ideal for everyone, but for me, it checked every box. It fit the budget. Every summer I make plans to rebuild the decaying deck but never find the time. Without school and a formal work schedule, this could be the year we finally do it. My children would have the rare opportunity to experience the same sort of pre-internet childhood I enjoyed.

Armed with a cast-iron skillet and my beloved Breville cappuccino maker, I took a breath and leaped. Our first night around the dinner table, I looked at my boys' faces and knew I made the right decision. We had a home-cooked meal, uninterrupted by the internet or television. I had a contented smile on my face as the middle one bowed his head to pray.

"Thank you, Lord, for our safe traveling today, and Lord, ... we just pray that this is over soon."

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