

The Roommate

Brenda Oreste*

I decided to stay with one of my friends while renovations took place at my house. I was looking forward to a week of rest and relaxation. However, nothing could have prepared me for the menace she shared her flat with. In front of me stood the most obnoxious and self-centred individual I had ever laid eyes on.

"You'll be sharing a room with Mark," my friend warned us. "Hope you two get along."

Mark smiled at me, but his act did not trick me, for I knew that ill intentions were hidden behind that grin.

In order to get to know each other better, we had lunch together that day. To say it was an uncomfortable experience is an understatement. The silence was palpable. I knew that he felt exactly the way I did. We simply did not like each other from the very start, and had no intention of getting along.

I could feel Mark staring at me intently. I was not going to let him belittle me, so our intense glaring match began. On the opposite side, stood Mark, who proceeded to stuff his face and chew as loudly as possible, with his mouth open. He was in it for the win. I was so appalled by his manners that I had to look down in surrender. Victory. Mark gave me a triumphant grin. My friend, oblivious to our war of prides, started to ask about the renovations, but no matter how hard I tried to focus, my gaze kept drifting back to Mark, who was now intentionally slurping his drink, his eyes glinting perversely.

Needless to say, my situation did not improve during the week. Mark was a pro at being a nuisance and seemed to rejoice in sabotaging any chance I had of peace. If I sat down to watch the telly, he would immediately appear as if he could sense my presence. Then, he would demand we watched his favourite show, which coincidentally was on at the exact same time as *my* favourite one. There was no argument I could win against him, for my claims were refuted by an extremely strong argument: this was *his* flat, and I was merely a guest.

By the end of the day, I was exhausted both physically and mentally. And yet, as soon as I went to bed and closed my eyes, Mark began to laugh. Fed up, I decided to put an end to this feud right then and there. He would hear me out whether he liked it or not.

"What's so funny?" I asked. The exasperation in my voice was noticeable.

He did not reply, and instead continued to giggle. His tone was as irritating as nails on a chalkboard. He knew exactly how to get on my nerves, but this time, I was done playing his game. I would show him he had no power over me. I would show him I was the better person. And so I shut my eyes and took a deep breath. He would not get a reaction out of me.

His answer was immediate. A growl of anger. My indifference had gone straight to his ego, and he was about to let everyone in the neighbourhood know. Blinded by his selfish performance, I forgot all about my peaceful act and yelled back at him.

Naturally, our screaming match was not welcomed by my friend, who was abruptly awakened by our heated exchange. She quickly scanned the room for any threats, but once she understood the situation, her gaze returned to me, glaring in disappointment.

"Seriously, Matt? You're so immature." She sighed. "You're an adult now. You can't be quarrelling with my toddler. Get it together!" She shut the door with a loud bang.

Mark and I stared at each other for a moment and burst into laughter.