

## **A House Shared is a Problem Doubled**

*(But I wouldn't say I'm overly troubled...)*

### The expurgated edition

Living with people really is the purple pim. I fancy it doesn't matter how many qualities you share, there is nothing which can dilute the monster within us all. It might be a template from which to work, but sooner or later the blue print will catch fire, setting alight the great chunks of hair pulled with fury from your own cranium and which have been silently littering the house, without purpose, for months. Forego the obvious: playing music at all hours, and styles therein, there are more sinister avenues of dismal exploration to be found in the unpredictable nadir of the human unconscious where in uncharted territories, in the dark alcoves of our personalities, probity wears a death mask.

It is becoming, at least for me, increasingly important to go to my cupboard in the kitchen and reach for, when I like, my jar of mustard and find that it still has contents, or striding about in the nip strumming a strategically placed ukulele than it is to look in to the eyes of fellow occupants, daggers of disquiet sharpening my own to atom fine points. Company is another thing altogether. Company doesn't come in to it. Company is our friend, and it's the sort of friend who goes away when you do, who sleeps when you sleep, who listens to the same music as you fancy listening to. And, it's the type of friend who doesn't filch your Colman's wholegrain or reprimand you for urinating in a jug because the bathroom has been occupied for 40 years and the only chance of gaining entry is by turning in to a gas. Yes, company is good. Living with domestic and social neophytes who ferret amongst your things is not.

Again it's the simple things: over usage of loo paper without replacement, increasingly frequent spoonfuls of Nescafe going missing and dishes piling up to stratus forming altitudes. And even, *and even*, when they have been done, I am saddened by the loam that remains. What remains is bewildering to say the least. I mean, spotless is good. It's a good start is spotless. But germs aside, I've seen visible grievances. Not just specks. I'm talking about 'things'. Almost meals. Whole pie crusts have been spotted, full cups of tea hanging from hooks and mushrooms still on the end of forks, upturned in the drainer.

Can communication prevent any of this? Well, communication probably has a good a chance as anything. Although you need to be reading from the same page to start with to allow this great wheel of understanding to turn in everybody's favour. Whilst some people are reading from Keats, others are thumbing vacantly through a soft, vividly coloured bath book with lift up flaps about a duck with a magic bill. 'They' say communication is the key and in many ways 'they' are right. But when you're addressing issues which you feel the ambit of common sense should have been instrumental in halting (the fecund growth of the abused), you inadvertently don the ghastly cloak of an oik. For then you're not only pointing out their failings or should I say the failings within the universe in which you inhabit but you also run the risk of bringing their intelligence in to the fray. And that's not pleasant for either party, even if you have knocked cleverer objects off the stand at a coconut shy.

I am by no means free from having the pistol of reproach waved in my sallow face but I don't believe it should ever go off. Not being a polemicist and far from being the kind of chap who likes conflict, I still find myself sounding like an anus when addressing a farrago of petty niggles which somehow I feel incumbent on me to petition against. I haven't even mentioned receiving notes from people and the volcanic rage which ignites the paper or often the back of a cereal packet a fraction after reading the specious ramblings. Nor have I mentioned constructing little dolls in the shadows after being lied to again about the disappearance of my light bulbs or the landlord who seldom fails to give you the dromedary protuberance on his arrival. There is now no further time left to impart any sapient notes for a much needed epilogue. All I can do is turn to a much misunderstood figure of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that of Friedrich Nietzsche, and deliberately paraphrase from an apposite maxim which goes: 'Where neither love nor hate is in the game I am a mediocre player'. Good evening!