December 2014

Letters from a Bitter Roommate

Cole Komma
Iowa State University

Renae Meines
Iowa State University

Riley Eveleth
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/ethos

Part of the Higher Education Commons, Journalism Studies Commons, and the Social Psychology and Interaction Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ethos by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.
Jenny* needed a roommate. She had recently decided to transfer to Iowa State and desperately needed a place to live. Her last available option was Regina*.

Things went well for the first couple of days, but then “certain things got kind of weird,” Jenny says. “She introduced me to her friends as her best friend after two days of knowing her.” Jenny felt this was a little odd, but nothing to get upset about.

As time went on, Regina began trying to control her. So much so, that Jenny began to feel self-conscious. “She would come to my door and tell me she was worried I wasn’t working out enough and try and get me to go to the gym,” Jenny says.

She would also borrow Jenny’s clothes frequently, which didn’t bother Jenny, as long as she OK’d what Regina was borrowing. “She would ask to borrow clothes before, but I would approve them while I was there,” Jenny says. “Somehow after that occasion, she felt that she was entitled to my closet.”

One afternoon, Jenny came home to her Banana Republic cardigan lying on the ground, missing a button and being chewed on by Regina’s dog.

“Did you wear this last night? Why did you go into my closet?” Jenny asked Regina.

“Oh um, well I actually didn’t wear that last night. I thought about wearing it, but I didn’t. Sorry,” Regina replied.

Five minutes later...

“I just realized there are pictures of me on Facebook from last night. I did wear that.”

When a love interest moves into a living space inhabited by multiple people, things may get awkward. Or in Jenny’s case, out of hand. Regina’s boyfriend lived a floor above them in an apartment of his own, but never spent any time there. “So I said he needed to start pitching in on utilities and when she disagreed, I decided for the next utilities bill, I would write it for one-third [of the bill],” Jenny says.

Then the power went out. Regina had intentionally turned off the power to Jenny’s room. “I flipped it on and was like, ‘What’s this about?’ and she said, ‘Well when you start paying your bills, you can have electricity,’” Jenny says.

And then the micromanaging started.

“She wanted me to individually bag food before I put it in the trashcan because she was worried about the garbage can smelling,” Jenny says. “I explained to her, as calmly as I could, garbage cans tend to smell. That’s why they have lids. That’s why you take them out when they’ve been sitting too long.”

Jenny and Regina eventually bought separate garbage cans to resolve their disagreement. One day, Jenny returned home to find Regina and her boyfriend enjoying a nice meal. Little did Jenny know, the entire contents of Regina’s garbage can lay in a pile in front of her bedroom door. “What is this to you? Is this dinner and a show? What the fuck is wrong with you?” Jenny said to Regina.

When Jenny tried addressing any of the issues mentioned above, Regina took it personally. “She tried to say I was the one being harassing even though I was the one who was pushed into my bedroom. I was the one staying out of the way. I basically, completely submitted to what she wanted to just avoid conflict. And she still thought I was the one that was out of line,” Jenny says.

This bullying went to such extremes that Jenny hired a lawyer and filed a police report regarding the acts of harassment.

Jenny has only seen her ex-roommate once this year. The time Jenny spent in that apartment had caused her anxiety to intensify and her weight to drop. Jenny was on the verge of tears as she recalled that time.

“When I got out of there, it was like I could breathe again. I didn’t even realize how bad my anxiety had gotten. I was losing weight and my hair was falling out—I was terrified of this girl,” Jenny says.
Sarah’s Story

Another Iowa State student, Sarah*, met her roommate, Sven*, on the bus to Seven Oaks Recreation Park in Boone. They became friends and grew close enough to be roommates. Things went swimmingly at first, until money became an issue.

“I was living with [him] and he was like ‘We so have to go on this snowboarding trip,’” Sarah says.

Sarah was short on cash, so Sven said he would loan her the money. The trip was over, the money was paid back and things went back to normal. At least for a little while. Then a call came from their landlord saying the gas bill had not been paid in six months.

“He wanted to be in charge of the utilities, he wanted his name on everything,” Sarah says. “Hey, sign up for the gas bill,” Sarah said to Sven.

“Ok I’ll do it, I’ll do it,” he said.

Three reminders later...

“I get another call from my landlord saying we still haven’t done it,” Sarah says. Sarah confronted Sven who told her he doesn’t want his name on another bill. They worked out a deal that she will take the portion she uses to pay the gas bill out of the other utilities account.

“So the next utility bill comes up and I take $10 out of [the account] and I get this huge text message saying: ‘You owe me another $10 if you can’t pay your utilities, you need a second job, fuck you for not paying your shit...’ on and on,” Sarah says.

Sven also used their drinking cups for chew spit, frequently broke dishes and abused Sarah’s dog. “He would purposely pick up my dog as a puppy and throw him down,” Sarah says. “My dog is still scared to be picked up. He hates my dog, he would kick him.”

Sarah experienced vengeful scenarios with Sven, who had very confusing mood swings. “He was mad we bought pizza one time...I kept thinking it was done with and then I would come home and my furniture [was] flipped,” Sarah says. “Or there’d be a note on the wall saying ‘Hey, fuck you.’”

Like any relationship, Sarah says communication is key when confronting issues with roommates. “Approach it like a grown-up I guess. Don’t come in complaining and crying,” Sarah says. “If your roommate is being difficult, you need to take the high road.”

All roommates have differences and will encounter problems. But when the problems are this numerous and outlandish, the best option is to get the hell out.