

The moment of clarity for me was when my colleague said to me at work, like, you're just being his mother. You're cleaning for him, you're tidying for him. Like the only thing he occasionally did consistently was cook. But then, I'm sorry, he made such a mess when he cooked that I would have to clean up, that it just made me angry.

Hello, my Lovely Learners and welcome to Easy Stories in English. Ooh! The podcast that will take your English from Okay to Good and from Good to Great. I am Ariel Goodbody, your host for this show. In today's episode, we are exploring the wonderful world of housemates. Living with other people. Oh, what fun it is, especially when you don't have a choice in the matter!

So right now I live in China, and this is the first time in my adult life that I have been able to live by myself. It's one of those things where, I considered it a lot in the past, but it wasn't really an option financially because rent is very expensive in the UK, especially in London, but also just pretty much anywhere. You know, the balance between somewhere that has good job opportunities but doesn't have expensive rent is very, very, very, very difficult in the United Kingdom.

But fortunately in China, affordable housing is available in many, many places. Maybe not Beijing and Shanghai and other tier one mega cities, but in little old Ningbo, I can easily afford a three bedroom on my salary. So this is a privilege I have been enjoying a lot.

The thing is I had some truly terrible housemate experiences. I just had a string of bad living situations. I think I maybe had one or two, depending on how you define it, that were good, but every other one was kind of a nightmare horror story.

And unfortunately, this is sadly quite common for British people of my generation. If you're not in a high earning career, then you likely will have to keep sharing with people. And honestly, in London, I knew people still house sharing in their fifties, which is quite sad when you think about it.

Because, yes, there are downsides to living alone. It can be lonelier. It can be more expensive. You have to take more responsibility for your social wellbeing. But there's a lot to be said about having your own private space to retreat to, and there are so many other potential stressors of sharing with other people that I think are a lot worse. Essentially, when you are house sharing, you lose control over so many things, whereas when you live by yourself, yes, there are challenges, but also you can kind of do what you want with your place and when you are at home.

So anyway, I thought today I would regale you with some stories, I would tell you some stories of my housemate living experiences. Actually, I'm going to tell you every housemate experience I've had and um, it's a bit, it's a bit sensitive. Um, one, I couldn't talk about this easily in the past because I didn't want to give exact place names because I didn't want people to come and find me. But now I've moved out of the UK, I'm in a different country, so I can tell you exactly where I used to live, although I'm not gonna like give the address or anything because you probably don't know where it is.

And I am not gonna name names. I'm going to come up with names for all of my ex housemates. And again, it's very sensitive because obviously they might listen to this. They might have their side of the story. They almost certainly will have their own version of the story. They may have changed completely since we lived together. I have certainly changed as well.

So I want to make it clear that this podcast is not intended as like a call out post. I'm not trying to, you know, drag these people through the mud. I'm not trying to make them seem like awful, horrendous people. I'm aware that I'm not a perfect housemate either, or I wasn't in various situations, and I know that, yeah, living with people is one of the hardest things

because even when you like someone and get on with them, it's very unlikely that you will have the same kind of habits, routines, and preferences for living together.

Having said that, my experiences are my experiences and I'm allowed to talk about my experiences, so let's get into it.

My first house sharing experience was in Bristol after university. I had been living with my parents for a bit, and then I started teaching English and I moved out to Bristol because my parents were selling their house and moving to the countryside, and, hmm.

It was interesting. First of all, I had never rented before. I was very, very lucky when I went to university. To Cambridge, thank you! That I had subsidized student accommodation all three years of my study. So I came out of university at 25 never having rented. And this was a problem because many, many landlords wanted references to be able to rent. So I wasn't able to get a lot of places that I looked at.

But eventually I found this place in Bristol. It was a house share. It was in an area of north Bristol called Southmead, which I found out after I moved there, was the sh\*t part of Bristol, the not very good part of Bristol, shall we say. And it certainly did have a lot of dog sh\*t on the pavements, so I can definitely attest to the fact that that name is quite accurate.

Additionally, it was okay, a 20 minute bus ride from Bristol City Centre. Doesn't sound too bad, except the buses were some of the least reliable buses in Bristol. They didn't run that often and they didn't run that late. So it was actually a very inconvenient place to live, especially because at the time I was still working in Bath, so I was getting the bus 20 minutes into Bristol City Centre and then getting the bus one hour from Bristol City Centre into Bath to go to work. And I thought I might be able to find language teaching work in Bristol, and I tried and that was not successful. So I, I think I lived there for about seven or eight months.

So I didn't get to know my housemates particularly well. It was also one of those sharing places where each room has a lock on it, so it wasn't super sociable. I was sharing with some Nigerians. I believe my landlady was also Nigerian. Uh, it was strange at, at one point her son lived with us and the controls for the heating were in his bedroom, which meant he kept his bedroom really warm because he had like a fridge and a microwave and a space heater in there, but he kept the rest of the house freezing cold.

So I was there in the living room trying to edit podcasts and prepare my classes in like a 14 degree room, whereas when I went and knocked on his door and asked if he could turn the heating on, his room was like boiling hot, like he was half naked and this wave of heat hit me. I was like, oh, okay. Great. So that's great for you. This, what, I think 19-year-old university student? But as a working adult, I was very frustrated.

I had a tiny bedroom. I had a single bed. Sorry, as I'm talking about this, I'm getting angrier and angrier. I kind of knew making this video, I was going to get quite emotional and we've only just started, so there we go.

But yeah, the actual house itself was cold. It was full of the landlady's discarded things. So we had like a mug that said like Daddy's Little Monkey on it, and it had clearly belonged to like one of her daughters or something. And I think it even had photographs of this girl on it. The landlady would randomly show up sometimes without announcing it.

We didn't have a shower curtain. We didn't have a shower curtain. So we had like a bath with a shower in it, but we didn't have a curtain, which obviously meant if you stood up and showered, it got water everywhere. And in some countries, you know you have a drain in the floor, so you can use the bathroom as a wet room. That's not common in the UK. So the whole time I was there, I showered kind of lying down in the bath, but one time she came randomly and she's like, I've bought a shower curtain. And she came with like three of her

sons, 'cause they had just come back from a holiday, and they were there to install the shower curtain.

Well first of all, she just opened the box and all of the screws and bits kind of flew everywhere. And I was like, oh my God. So already you've lost parts. And then she was getting her son to try and drill these things into the wall, except the wall was tiles. It was ceramic tiles, right? Like hard ceramic tiles. A normal drill cannot break through that. You need a special ceramic drill head to do that. So it just cracked all the ceramics and we didn't get a shower curtain, so that was annoying.

There was also, um, in the UK you usually have a separate bin for food waste and that gets collected separately. And that's quite important because if you put all of the food waste in the regular bin, which doesn't get collected as often, you might get maggots, right? You might get these insects because of all this rotting food.

So we had a food bin and we put it outside because of the maggot situation, because before, my housemates had been just cooking massive meals. Now, to be fair, it was very nice. It was like jollof rice and stuff, like nice Nigerian food, but they were like just pouring all the leftovers in the bin every day, and then we got maggots. And I don't like having maggots. They're not very nice.

I was the one who set up the food bin and I was like, guys, we need to put stuff in the food bin. Like food waste goes in the food bin, let's keep it outside so if it smells, it's not a problem. But then in the winter, I saw one of my housemates pouring food into the regular bin. I was like, no, no, no, put it in the food bin. And she said, oh no, but it's cold. I don't want to go outside. I don't care. I don't want maggots. Um. So that was weird.

One of my housemates, she was quite young, I think she was like 15 or something, and her uncle also lived with us, so it's like she had come to the UK from Nigeria with her uncle. And so at one point I helped her with her English homework. That was funny.

And then the uncle he would sometimes sit on the sofa and like watch YouTube videos on his phone. And I overheard them one time and they sounded really weird, like conspiracy videos. And then he said to me, have you ever heard of the Illuminati? And I was like, oh no. Oh no. I, I was like, oh yeah, I've, I've heard of it. And he's like, it's crazy, isn't it? And I was like, oh, but I, I don't think it's real. And he's like, oh no, it's definitely real. So, um. Yeah, I was quite glad to move out of there.

They weren't bad people and, to be honest, of all the housemates I had, they were some of the easiest. But um, it was not an ideal living situation, shall we say? Also, when I left, the weirdest request I had from the landlady. It's normal to be asked to clean when you leave. She asked that I put the curtains in my bedroom in the washing machine. Why? They're curtains, they don't get that dirty. Also, I'm pretty sure most curtains are not machine washable, but there you go.

That's actually, though, that's where I started Easy Stories in English. I started Easy Stories in English in the bedroom of that crappy, crappy house share in Bristol. So there we go. Seven years ago, this all began.

So after that, I moved back to Bath because I was unable to find work in Bristol. I had a friend from a writing group I was in. Actually, she founded the writing group and she was also looking to move to somewhere a bit bigger, but she wanted to save money on rent, so she wanted to share. So we decided to move in together.

So we moved into this flat, which was honestly like five minutes down the road from the house I grew up in. It was so close to my childhood home, so that was kind of funny. So I knew the area well. So that was nice. But this building was strange. I think it was an office building that was converted into flats and it was not converted well. So, it kind of looked nice,

but it was very cold. It had a very weird layout. We kind of had this like living room, like this L-shaped kind of living room kitchen, but the kitchen was very small and then my room was really big to be fair, so I paid a bit more rent. And then the bathroom.

A lot of buildings in the UK are not well designed or they're old buildings that have been refurbished. There's often problems with mould, as in like black mould because of humidity, because of poor ventilation. This bathroom was no exception. It had no windows and it had an extractor fan. You know those fans that like take out the air? But like most extractor fans, it wasn't very good. So it was always a bit dirty and mouldy.

But that wasn't the real problem. The real problem was my relationship with my housemate. Now, when I moved in with her, I thought we were okay friends. And I want to clarify here, I was not a great person to live with at that time because I didn't have a lot of life skills such as cooking and cleaning. Because when I was at university, they cleaned our rooms for us. We had a school canteen, so I didn't need to cook and clean so much.

But also I think it's just, I don't know. This is where you just have different upbringings and stuff, right? So I fully admit that at the beginning I was not pulling my weight with the cleaning.

But! She was also very, very, very bad at communicating about this stuff. 'Cause I could tell she was frustrated and I was trying my best, and I think I did improve a lot. Like I wasn't cleaning like super regularly, but I would at least clean things that needed cleaning, right? I was like taking out the bins. I was cleaning the kitchen, I was cleaning the bathroom. It's not like I wasn't cleaning at all.

Personally, I think her standards were quite high. She wanted to do a deep clean where we like moved the sofa and hoovered under the sofa like every two months, which is kind of crazy because most people I've met are like, oh, I maybe do a deep clean like once a year, if that.

So I think she didn't make it quite clear before we moved in how much she cared about cleanliness. I would call her a clean freak personally. She just said, oh, I just like things to be tidy, but they don't have to be super clean. That was a lie. That was a lie. So that was one thing.

And then it was also just obvious she didn't want to live with someone because she was getting annoyed about the cleaning thing. And she was getting quieter and quieter and not talking to me. And I was like, okay. And eventually I was like, we need to talk, like what's going on? And she kind of went, oh, oh, mm, oh mm, I think I miss living alone. Oh, that's a horrible thing to say! I'm gonna go for a walk. And then she went out for a walk and didn't talk to me for eight months.

I'm not joking. From that moment onwards, she did not say a word to me. She didn't say hello. She didn't say good morning. She just became this ghost. Every time I was in the house, she would only stay in her bedroom. One time I walked past her on the street and she blanked me as if she didn't know me. One time, I accidentally locked myself out, so I had to sit outside the door, um, after work and wait for her to come home. And she literally came, she stepped over me and opened the door without saying a word.

Now, at the time, I was really hurt by this because one, I thought we were friends, but two, I was a much more sensitive person at the time. This kind of ruined my life for those eight months, to be honest. I felt like a social pariah, like a complete outcast. I didn't understand why she was treating me in that way.

Now, with hindsight, I can see that she was a loser. Um, and she was probably just depressed. I don't know. Her behavior was just absolutely incomprehensible to me, like, at the end of the day, you have a responsibility to communicate even if something your

housemate does annoys you. Like I said, I'm not the perfect person to live with, but the way she behaved was just so unnecessary.

But the cherry on the cake is, she said in February, 2020, oh, I'm going to move out and live by myself. And then one month later, COVID happened. So I was like, hmm, I hope you like living by yourself now.

So, uh, I don't know. I never really heard from her again after that. And to be honest, spending COVID in lockdown by herself probably was the last thing she needed when her mental health was in that state. But, you reap what you sow. If you put out that much bad energy, you're gonna get something back. So, I'm sorry.

Another thing about that place, um, it was leaky, like when it rained heavily, our ceilings leaked. We had water leaking through the lights in the kitchen. I had like huge wet patches in my bedroom, and they never fixed that because it was something to do with this gutter that was like built into the roof of the building that was too expensive to fix.

So we moved out and other people moved in. Well, actually no, I'm, I'm getting ahead of myself because I still lived there for a while but with someone else.

So at that point I was in the quite lucky position of being the person living somewhere and getting to choose who moved in with me, which I have not had since. I've never had that opportunity since. I think if I had the chance now, I would probably be really, really picky, but you never really know. A few people came, actually, I think like two people came to look at the house, essentially.

One person was this weird hippie girl who wanted to eat every meal together and was really like pro-Israel. Um, so I didn't wanna move in with her. And then the other person was a trans girl, about the same age as me. I was trans at the time. I was transitioning at the time. So it seemed like a really good fit. And she moved in.

And in most ways she was a lovely person. I think she was definitely going through her own struggles. We were also living together during COVID, so that would put a strain on any relationship or any friendship, right? We got on pretty well. She was nice. She was very shy, very quiet, but she was incredibly messy.

And I kind of, in a way, got a taste of my own medicine. I got to experience what it was like to be on the other end of the hygiene divide, to see what it's like when you are the person who does the cleaning, and the other person is really messy. But again, I couldn't really be that mad at her because it was COVID and, you know, after my last experience, I was just happy to be living with someone who talked to me, although she did wake me up a few times in the night 'cause she was singing really loudly and I would like bang on the wall and be like, I'm sleeping! So that was funny.

Um, yeah, she was going through some of her own struggles at the time and I respected that. But, uh, it was a bit much having to like pull her hair out of the drain in the bathroom, clean up bits of food off the floor. But then also she did lots of cooking, so she would cook food and we would eat together. So I couldn't really be mad, again, because like she was cooking for me. So like, if someone cooks for me, they can pretty much do no wrong in my books.

Anyway, about a year later, I met my partner, um, at that time, who was also a trans woman. And I, it was about August, 2021, or no, July. Yeah, July, August, 2021. I moved in with her in rural Devon in the middle of nowhere in the UK and we lived together for two and a half years. And that was, that was fine.

I'm not even gonna really talk about that here because that wasn't really a housemate situation. I chose to live with that person and it was nice. And yeah, uh, it was a house,

which was nice. Like a real, a real, a real ass house. Like a whole house. Yes. So, moving on.

Me and her did eventually break up, and I moved to London in, uh, September 2023. Yeah, about September 2023. Now, here's where things get a bit complicated. At first, I moved in with my boyfriend at the time, who was a French guy, who is a, a very interesting character, very hippie, very artistic, and he lived in a housing cooperative, which is essentially where lots of people live in a house together and pay cheap rent. And the idea is that the rent only goes towards paying off the mortgage. Um, there's no landlord like collecting profits. You're basically just paying the amount that's necessary. And then eventually, if a housing co-op goes on for long enough, they can pay off the mortgage and then everyone gets to pay really, really cheap rent.

They also had like house meetings. They had shared food. Um, it was more of a community vibe. You weren't allowed to eat meat in the house. It was vegetarian and vegan only.

So I lived there for about two months with my boyfriend. Uh, we broke up in the process of those two months. I tried to get a place in this housing co-op to like live there properly. I did interviews and everything and it was a very strange process. Basically, I figured out, or I was told basically that, when I interviewed for it, I was together with him, my boyfriend, and all the other people in the house were a bit sick of him. They were like, they were like, oh, if Ariel moves in, then his boyfriend is gonna be visiting all the time, and we don't want that. We don't, we're tired of him, basically, we want him to leave.

So, um, I didn't get the place and I was very distraught about it at the time. I was very sad about it at the time, but I made some amazing friends, actually. I made some really good friends.

Also! Also. Okay. First of all, there was about 10 people living in that house, so it was kind of intense and crazy. It was like three floors and there were two, like huts in the garden that they had built that like two people lived in. One of the people there grew up her entire life in the co-op, like she's now 18 or 19 and she was born there. So like she lived her entire life in this cooperative with all these different people moving through, this kind of very alternative lifestyle. So that must have been very, very interesting. There were some lovely, lovely people there.

And there was also an old friend of mine. So when I moved in, I met this girl called Nanu and she was Italian, but she'd lived in the UK. I think one of her parents is British. And I was like, oh, how funny. Back when I lived in Bath, I knew this Italian girl called Nanu who was also like half British. How funny. Didn't think about it.

And then like a month later, I was like, wait, Nanu, um, did you live in Bath? And she was like, yeah. And I was like, did you do like youth theater? And she was like, yeah. And then we realised we actually knew each other from 15 years before. We had done this theater summer camp in Bath called Storm on the Lawn. And because I had changed my name, she didn't recognise me and she didn't know it was me. And when we realised we knew each other, it was like, woah! Crazy. So we looked up all these old photos on Facebook from Storm on the Lawn, and it was very nostalgic.

So that was just so funny to reunite with someone 15 years later, but not even realise it for an entire month. Um, but yeah, it was, it was a lovely time there. I wish I could have stayed, in a way. But, uh, that's life. And actually the co-op, unfortunately, after like 18 years has now closed officially because there was a landlord actually in this case, and he wanted to sell the house. So they've all moved out now, unfortunately.

But anyway, during the time living there, I had to look for somewhere else to live in London, which was a very stressful process because I didn't have full-time employment. I wasn't making a lot of money. I was new to London and it was very expensive. So that was a very, very, very stressful month. But eventually I did find a place to live in Eltham.

Now, I would be shocked if you had heard of Eltham before, because it's an area of London that even most Londoners have never heard of. It's southeast, it's kind of at the borders of the city. It doesn't really feel like London in many ways. And the thing that Eltham is most famous for is, in 1993, the year I was born, Stephen Lawrence, a young black man, was stabbed to death at a bus stop, and it became a whole scandal because the police handled the investigation so badly. It revealed a lot of the endemic racism in the London police force.

I only found out about this after I moved in. I moved in and my mum came to visit. And we were walking around the area and we walked past the bus stop near my house and she said, oh, I just want to see if there's like a plaque. And I was like, why would there be a plaque at the bus stop? And she said, oh, well this is where Stephen Lawrence was stabbed.

So yeah, I lived just by the bus stop where he was stabbed. And the other thing that Eltham was kind of famous for was, I think in 2014, there was a neo-Nazi rally. So, um, by, by the standards of most places in the UK it was pretty diverse, but by London standards, it had a slightly, uh, you know, complicated history.

Having said that, it really wasn't that bad a place. It was cheaper than most of London. It had some really nice nature. There was a gorgeous park near the house. There was some ancient woodlands. So actually, I didn't love it at the time, but looking back, it really wasn't that bad.

Now the flat I lived in was very strange. There were all these houses that were built in the 1920s as lodging for people building the railroads, I think? So, because they were built in the 1920s, they were very big, very tall ceilings. I mean, the amount of space we had in London was crazy, but it was so cold in the winter because it only had single glazing, which is when you have just one layer of glass in the windows. It only had single glazing. It was an old building. It was very spacious. So it was very hot in the summer and very, very cold in the winter. I used to go to bed wearing multiple layers with a hot water bottle still shivering in the winter.

And it didn't help that my housemate was very stingy when it came to heating. Actually, he was just generally stingy. I don't have too many bad things to say about him, but like he worked at Nando's, the restaurant, and he didn't make loads of money, which is like fair enough, you know? I'm not gonna question people's work or life choices in that way.

But as a result, he just always wanted to save money. So he didn't want to put the heating on very much. He would just sit in his room in bed, watching TV, and obviously if you're just like cuddled up in bed, sure, you're gonna be warm. But I had to work, I had to record podcasts, I had to teach online, so I couldn't just like lie in bed all snuggled up. So obviously I needed to put the heating on, but then he would get annoyed that I was putting the heating on.

He was really, really into Dr Who, the British TV series, and he collected a lot of like figures and books. He generally collected a lot of things. There was a lot of his stuff in the flat, like there was a massive living room, and I kind of used some of it as my office space, but most of it was filled with his things.

So it was a strange place to live, but it wasn't terrible, honestly. We didn't have any major conflict. The reason I left was a bit complicated 'cause I lived there for like a year, but then the landlord said he was going to have to... It was like he was renting the building from

the council and he needed to renew the contract and he wasn't sure if he would be able to. He owned like a, a wine shop. We call it an off license, an alcohol shop. That was in the bottom of the building and we lived on the top of the building.

So I knew I was gonna have to move out at some point anyway, so I decided to get ahead of it and just move out before we had to leave.

So in December 2024, I moved into the last place I lived in London, which was Walthamstow. Walthamstow is in northeast London. It's on the end of the Victoria line, and it's a very strange place. It's quite far out, to be honest. It was kind of as far out from Central London as Eltham was, but it definitely felt more like London London.

It's kind of become this like artistic place for ageing hippies, um, and hipsters and some people saw me around that time and they were like, oh, I can tell you live in Walthamstow. You look like you live in Walthamstow, which I was always slightly offended by because I found some of the people in Walthamstow kind of annoying. Also for how far out Walthamstow was it was really quite expensive.

But it does have some beautiful buildings. It has the William Morris Museum, which you may have seen William Morris's artwork. He was like a really influential designer in the 20th century in Britain. And yeah, it was like a nice place to live, but it was not as convenient as I wanted, also...

Okay. This is where I have to be careful to not get too angry and emotional. Basically, I moved in with a friend. Hmm. Now if you remember how that went the first time, warning bells will be ringing. This was someone who I had known for a few years, but we hadn't like been super in touch all that time. There was actually a period of about six or seven months where we didn't talk at all, like I chose to stop talking to him, and I probably should have taken that as a warning sign.

The thing with this person was... People throw around the term narcissist a lot these days and I think often it's like people trying to use the language of psychology to basically just say, I don't like this person, but if narcissists exist, then this person was a narcissist.

Um, he was very charming, he was very good at talking, but he just always wanted to hold court. He always wanted to be laughing, joking, having long conversations, correcting you on things, getting into deep stuff, and it was just kind of exhausting on a daily basis. There were times where I came home after work and he would just want to talk for like three hours and it's like, I can't do that. I've been at work all day. I have a very social job. I teach. I cannot come home and talk to you for hours. Like I don't have the energy for that. And it just felt like every conversation with him was a competition where he was always trying to outsmart you, outwit you, outperform you. His laugh was always so loud. It was just like his energy level was always at 100 in a conversation and it was so exhausting.

The problem was my body had told me long ago that I didn't like being with this person, like being around this person made me feel anxious, but I was ignoring those warning signs. Right? And a lot of his personality. I feel like I could have dealt with it better if he wasn't also just a slob. Like he was just so disgusting.

And you know, I had lived with someone who was pretty dirty before, but he was on another level. I would wake up every day to go to work and I would have to wash up his dishes. I would have to move all of his food from the countertop to be able to make my breakfast. So I started every day really angry because I was just cleaning up his stuff.

He never took the bins out. He never hoovered. He never cleaned the bathroom. I was the only one to clean the bathroom in the entire time I lived there, which was about six months. And when I called him out on it, that's when the real ugliness came out.

So it became this whole kind of argument because he was really good at deflecting. Like it was like he could sense when I was going to get angry about the cleaning. And then when I happened to be in the house, he's like, oh, I'm gonna clean up. Oh, don't worry. I'll do your washing up. Oh, let's take the bins out. But it was only when I was there and I was clearly getting annoyed by it that he would do that. All of the other times he didn't do it.

And then he had these ridiculous expectations, like he didn't want me to use my coffee grinder in the morning because it was too loud and it woke him up. Well, sorry, I have to go to work. I didn't have the luxury of working from home and like, what do you want me to do? It's a coffee grinder. It makes noise. If it's that bad, wear earplugs. Like I was not making noise at three in the morning. This was like seven or eight AM. That's not an unreasonable time to be making coffee, right?

So eventually I just really had to put my foot down and be like, I cannot handle this level of dirt and mess. 'Cause it was also the mess. He would go shopping and then he would just leave the bag of food on the table, not put anything away. He would buy so much food, and expensive food as well.

'Cause he loved spending money. He loved buying expensive food and expensive things. And he would kind of pressure me into buying expensive things as well and spending a lot of money. But like I didn't make as much money as him. And also he was in a lot of debt. I knew he was in debt 'cause he talked about it. So it's like, why are you, why are you spending so much money on food that you don't even put away? Or you put away and you forget about and then it goes mouldy. And then I have to throw your rotten food in the bin and then I have to empty the bin because you're not even doing that. So I'm like, literally, like managing your food, cleaning, tidying.

See, I told you I was gonna get angry. Oh my God.

The moment of clarity for me was when my colleague said to me at work, like, you're just being his mother. You're cleaning for him, you're tidying for him. Like the only thing he occasionally did consistently was cook. But then, I'm sorry, he made such a mess when he cooked that I would have to clean up, that it just made me angry.

Um, so eventually I just put my foot down and I was like, this has to change. Like, there's a level of hygiene that is like a bare minimum and we are not there. Like things like, I would go into the bathroom and I would take...

First of all, he always put his towel on top of my towel. There was theoretically enough space on the, the thing to put towels on, but you know, all of the shelves in the bathroom was all his products. When I started living there, I had to like clear out a bunch of his products to even have space for myself. There was no sense of let's have half of this shelf for you and half for me. It was all very vague. It was so difficult even to have space to put my things because most of the space was taken up with his stuff.

He would have old clothes in the living room, I would find his socks on the floor. Oh, he's decided to start ice skating. So his ice skating boots are now on the living room floor for like a month. Why? Like, his crap was just everywhere. It was unbelievable. You could barely move sometimes in this place and you know, oh God, sorry, I'm getting so angry.

But, um, yeah, there was, there was a moment where it was just too much where I was like, I cannot live like this. I remember what it was because I knew he was going away for a weekend to work. I was leaving the house on Friday and I looked around and I saw full bins, sink full of dishes, dirty countertop, and I said, wait a minute, so you're going away for the weekend and you are literally leaving me your dirty things to clean up while you are away. You don't even have the decency to clean up your dishes before you go away for the weekend, and that's where I lost it.

So it became this like long text discussion and he was really just deflecting and twisting everything. Like, oh, well I think the problem is that neither of us want to compromise and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Really trying to get me to agree to this idea that we were both in the wrong and I just, I really had to practice just non-reactivity and not giving up, not, you know, conceding to him because ultimately I was like, whatever I've done, I don't care. You have done these things wrong and that needs to change.

And so eventually we got into this argument in person and suddenly all of these things came out from him. Like, you're an emotional manipulator. You've manipulated me. And you know, the thing that really hurts me is that you couldn't even say it to my face. All of these like soap opera villain things, like he was playing this character. It was so overblown, so dramatic. That's coming from me, right? If I'm saying you're being too dramatic, imagine what that was like.

I was just kind of sitting there breathing deeply 'cause my heart was beating so frantically. I had been so anxious about this for weeks. But I was like, I just need to be non-reactive because he's trying to pull me into a battle. He wants this to be emotional, he wants this to be dramatic, and if I get emotional, then he wins, right? Because then there's both of us doing wrong. Then we're engaged in this like, kind of like unhealthy, like a relationship.

'Cause that was the thing. It was like multiple people, when I explained the situation to them, they were like, is this person in love with you? There was so much about his behavior that just seemed so emotionally codependent, like he would get angry about me not being in the house very much. When I first lived there, I had a boyfriend and I stayed, you know, maybe three nights a week at his place, and then my housemate would get angry. He's like, you're never at home. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's like, I have my own life. Why is it any of your business? You know?

It wasn't even just the cleaning, it was also the clinginess. He wanted us to have a whiteboard in our living room where we wrote down, oh, on Monday I'm gonna be here, on Tuesday, I'm gonna be here. Like, who does that? I'm sorry. I'm your housemate. I'm not your boyfriend. I'm not your mother. Like, my life is my life. Leave me alone.

So anyway, we had this argument and eventually I asked, okay, so I have said what my needs are. I have said what my needs are in terms of like cleanliness and tidiness. Clearly you have some emotional needs as a housemate. Fine. What are your emotional needs? What is it that you need? And he said, I just want to be able to hang out, to watch TV, to have a laugh every now and again. I don't think that's too much to ask.

And I said, in complete honesty, with everything that's happened, I cannot trust you, so I cannot give that to you because I don't feel comfortable offering that to you based on the things you've done.

And he said, well, fine, let's just go no contact then. And I said, great. Let's do that. Because that's exactly what I wanted. I won. I won the battle. I went back into my room and I was like, yes, yes. Because with all this like emotional storm that he created, I knew the best thing to do was to have no contact. I knew that us not talking was the best solution.

And this is the thing. I'm normally the kind of person, I will talk through anything. I will really try and solve any problem with discussion and empathy. But in this case, I had exhausted every option. If I talked about anything with him. It always turned into this big emotional, manipulative, overblown, dramatic thing. So we went no contact. I think that was in like March or April, and I moved out in July.

Another thing he did was, when I told him I was moving to China, he said, I just can't help but feel like you're moving to China to get away from me. Which is insane! Because first

of all, if you think, well, no, first of all, none of your business. It's my life. I don't care where you move. I don't care what your job is. That's your life. So it is none of your business if I choose to move to a different country. That is literally none of your business. Yes, I am your housemate. Yes, you will have to find someone else, but that's not my problem.

Second of all, the fact that you think that someone would choose to move halfway across the world just to get away from you, what does that say about you? If you believe that I would literally move from London to China just to get away from you, then clearly you think as lowly of yourself as I think of you.

I said I wasn't gonna get too emotional in this episode, but I also kind of knew this was going to happen because this was... This was possibly the most emotionally challenging interaction I've ever had with anyone in my life. I've moved to China. I've started a new job. That was far more stressful than anything I've done here. Honestly, moving to China was so easy compared.

It was so much, and then I had to spend like two or three months living with this person not talking. And here was the thing. I think he thought that this no contact thing wouldn't last. 'Cause he was the kind of person that he wanted to talk. He needed that interaction to kind of feed his ego.

'Cause that was the other thing. He was always making little comments to drag me down, to kind of make me question my self-esteem. And he was always boasting about his own things. He didn't speak any other languages fluently really, but he was interested in languages. So we connected over that, fine. But he would always kind of just make these comments like, oh, well you know, my friend is an interpreter and obviously you're really good at languages, but you could never do what he did because he's at this level and blah, blah, blah, blah.

And it's just like, why are you trying to drag me down? As a friend, if I'm moving to China, if I have a boyfriend, if I have an active social life, if I'm going out multiple nights a week to do standup comedy, you should be supportive of me. Right?

He was always there in a crisis. He was always there to support me when something was going wrong, but whenever something was going good in my life, whenever I was happy, he was always trying to drag me down to his level, and that's why he wasn't a real friend.

Okay. Whew. Okay. So anyway, um, oh, I forgot to tell you about the bathroom thing. So yeah, he had all this stuff in the bathroom. One time I came home, I took off his towel to pick up my towel because his towel was always on top of my towel. And then I smelled this horrible smell and I sniffed my towel and it smelled disgusting. So I smelled his towel and it smelled disgusting. And I realised, I don't think he had washed his towel for like at least a month. And it had got so smelly that like the smell had transferred from his towel to my towel, and then the whole bathroom stank basically.

And that was just, oh, I felt dirty living there. Like I felt unclean. It was, it was horrible. There were, oh my God. There were also other problems with that building because it was in this area that should have been a quiet residential area, but basically we were living in a terrace house that had been subdivided into like flats. So we lived on the top floor.

So my bedroom overlooked the garden, which I had no access to because it was the people living below who had access to it. And they were so loud, they were out in that garden every day, smoking, talking, drinking, having barbecues, playing music. There was one point in the summer where like multiple neighbours were having these like parties that lasted until like three in the morning playing loud, loud music in their gardens, which like kept

me awake. Like there was one on a bank holiday where like the building was shaking from how loud this music was and they were like three doors down. It was, it was crazy.

Honestly, I kind of take back what I said about, oh, there are two sides to every story. I'm sure he has his version of events, but after like going back through what happened, there's no, there's no explanation. There's no forgiving some of these things. 'Cause that's the thing, when we had this argument and he said I was an emotional manipulator, all of this stuff, it just fundamentally broke a level of trust with me, where I realised I can never trust this person again. This person is not out for me in a good way. This person actively wants my life to be bad, you know, whether or not he realises it himself.

And honestly that experience alone has made me question whether I ever want to share with housemates again because, you know, living in China now, I have the luxury of living by myself. But if I did ever move back to the UK, I might have to house share again, and I don't know if I could do it. You know, some of those experiences really tested me. Like that last experience was so painful.

Oh, sorry, I, I got interrupted again. Sorry. This episode has been kind of all over the place. Basically, we, we were no contact for the last few months and he then clearly tried to start initiating contact again. He had realised that, oh, Ariel really doesn't want to talk to me. So he was trying to kind of bridge things over and making little like comments and trying to be helpful and tidy stuff, and like, oh, I'm gonna order some food, some groceries. Do you want me to order anything? And I was always just like, nope, nope, fine. Kept it to an absolute minimum because I knew if I opened the door this much, he would push it wide open and suddenly I would get pulled back into his emotional games.

Yeah, that was a very, a very difficult episode in my life, and that was all last year, 2025. I started the year with a horrendous breakup. Then I had this housemate problem and then I moved to China. So like, honestly, that was a tough year for me.

Anyway. If I did ever move in with housemates again, I would move in with complete strangers because I think actually based on my experiences, it's far less risky moving in with complete strangers than with a friend. I think moving in with a friend is extremely risky.

I would also choose to live with at least three other people. I think living with one other person, there's a huge risk of it devolving into this like emotionally manipulative kind of codependent thing. If you live with two other people, there's the risk of two people getting really close and then the third person being ostracized and excluded. So I think like at least four people living together is a good situation.

I think in London there are many house shares that it's like a bunch of strangers living together, and that can work quite well because everyone just respects everyone else's lives and you don't get that close to people. And that's maybe kind of sad, like living with strangers. But after everything I've experienced kind of seems like the best option. So yeah.

I hope you don't feel like I'm an awful person after making this episode. I really debated for a long time whether I should talk about this at all. Mainly just the last experience. I feel like the other, you know, housemate experiences were pretty fair. But the last one, I couldn't sugarcoat it. I couldn't make it sound better than it was. It really was awful. There is nothing I could have done living there that would justify the things he did. Let's put it that way.

So anyway, uh, I hope you've enjoyed listening to this episode. Sorry for getting so angry and passionate, but it brought up some old emotions and that's okay. That's life sometimes. I'm glad in a way to have had those experiences so I know what kind of people to avoid in the future.

There is part of me that wonders, you know, I've had so many of these bad experiences, am I the problem? But after reflecting upon it a lot, I think, no. I think a lot of it is because I'm

quite an emotionally open person and there's a certain kind of person who sees that and they like want to kind of steal my energy, if that makes sense.

I definitely felt in that last situation in particular that there was this atmosphere of, oh, Ariel has this kind of like energy and this light and I wanna take it for myself. And I think that is a genuine thing. Some people call it energy vampires, which makes it sound very dramatic, but certainly when you are like a confident, comfortable, energetic, joyous person, there are always going to be people who want to steal that energy for themselves. So yeah.

Okay. Oh, I like, have all these feelings now and I don't know how to get rid of them. Um, and I don't really know how to end this episode. I guess I'll go have a cigarette. Um, but uh, yeah. Thank you for listening. If you have any similar nightmare housemate situations, please feel free to leave a comment wherever you may be.

And I'm gonna celebrate the fact that I now live alone. This has reminded me of how lucky I am. Alright, thanks for listening and goodbye!