

They put a guy ~~in this~~^{in this} cell with me about 3 months ago, and I'm very unhappy about it. Actually, he wasn't so much put here as he put himself here, and that's the root of my problem. When this guy got himself in trouble and was forced to move, he learned I had an empty bunk, and recognizing my name, he supposed he'd

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found a soft, non-threatening landing place where he could slide in as he escaped a hostile environment. He never spoke with ~~me about it~~^{me about it} — given the urgency of his move, he probably couldn't have, but he certainly should have tried — so he simply didn't know how absolutely opposed I was to having ANYONE move in here, and how unwelcoming I'd be so soon after I'd finally gotten some desperately needed time to myself.

Thus was the groundwork laid for resentment, frustration, and friction.

That said, in his position, I'd likely have done the same thing. He needed a safe harbor and thought he'd found one. I understand his situation, and I really can't hold that against him. Only what he's done since.

With so many vacant beds in this building, I was extremely upset to hear I was being cursed with another cellmate ~~after just one week~~^{after just one week} of peace and solitude. It was especially galling insofar as about a dozen other inmates had been blissfully alone for many months already, so I seriously considered just refusing to let the arriving refugee in — a risky action in a few ways, but worse, also a real dick move. However, since I recognized the guy coming in when I finally saw him, I decided it was only decent to just let him come in with no drama and find out what had happened; after all, abrupt mid-week moves almost guarantee that something ugly has happened, and I do believe strongly in being helpful whenever possible, so I wanted to hear him out, let him decompress from whatever he'd just gone through, then work out what to do from there. I figured I could give him a mellow place to spend a week or two in search of somewhere he could settle into more permanently. But that was three months ago. Three MISERABLE months. ☹

I should clarify... though we "knew" each other, it was just through a handful of superficial passing conversations, and every time we interacted... he genuinely annoyed the fuck out of me. You know how certain people, certain personalities, just repulse you? How some people's every utterance, however objectively innocuous or well-intentioned, just grates on you like fingernails screeching across a chalkboard? That's this guy, for me. He was never unfriendly — in fact, he was always over friendly — and I was never disrespectful or mean to him... why would I be, when he meant no harm and there was no reason our interactions had to last more than 4 or 5 minutes at most? But from early on, I knew, I sensed it as strongly as anything: I did NOT want to ever be stuck in a prison cell with him. I could just tell he'd drive me absolutely bonkers.

And now, here we are.

Okay, so I know I've probably become less tolerant of some things, after years now of torture and abuse; after countless hours of inescapable exposure to utter inanity... but honestly, I really do think you'd have to be the saintliest saint or simplest simpleton to endure this guy day after day after day with anything like patient equanimity. There's simply no relief, no end in sight, and often I just want to scream, "Enough!"

Just stop! Stop lying, stop foisting on me these ridiculous fantasies of your years travelling the Orient to learn ancient fighting systems from the masters and monks of Thailand and Japan! Stop telling me you sparred with UFC superstar Rhonda Rousey (while calling her "Wanda" Rousey - no joke, and no, he doesn't have a speech impediment). I'm just so tired of being accosted by his persistent hints and encouragements to ask "what are you doing?," when it's clear the answer will always be along the lines of this gem from his second day here: "Man, it's hard work translating a 5,000 year old language." Not wanting to be rude, I indulged him, and he excitedly showed me a scribbly notebook page he'd titled "Babylonian Sand Script," all full of what he earnestly insists is the "Sand Script alphabet," which in a remarkable coincidence contains exactly 26 characters that correspond perfectly with our familiar Latin letters. - Sigh - And every day, ever hour, really, is something similar. Yes, I know - be nice. I understand that he needs attention, probably validation... I get it. And, for sure, I want to be kind. I do have my own problems and priorities too, though, and it's not like giving him what he needs will result in his needing less later - probably just the opposite, actually. Anyway, I'm not a social worker or preschool teacher... and, I just want him gone. - I didn't really want him to know how much so, though.

A couple of days ago, feeling conflicted, I wrote in a journal, "Which do you dislike more: Quietly dealing with a painfully unpleasant person (i.e. pasting on the fake smile and providing dutifully appropriate responses even though you know that's just going to encourage more excruciating interactions), or being a dick by rudely ignoring or dismissing someone?" I hate to think I'm even capable of being a dick just because someone annoys me, but both options are awful and it was something to seriously think about. Then today happened.

Today, he woke me up. Not on purpose, but 5 or 6 times, and the last time, when he saw me lift my head a little, he asked, "what's up?" If he'd said nothing, I'd just have fallen asleep, again, mildly irritated - but instead I snapped, "Me. I'm up." I was obviously pissed, and he was stung a bit, but what wasn't so obvious was that my anger wasn't really about him waking me up (again); rather, it was more about his still being here at all, 3 months after inviting himself in and despite agreeing that he really should find himself an arrangement with someone who actually wants his company. My anger today had to do with so many things, like his obnoxious claim to have read 6 of my densest science and philosophy books in the 8 1/2 days I was gone, including I and Thou by Martin Buber, about which he said, bizarrely and a propos of nothing at all, "I will say this, in spite of everything, that man does have a good, deep intellect, writing about his storyline." (Why will you say this? And, "in spite of what? And, what "storyline"??) My anger comes from the exhaustion of listening to him speak constantly in word salads that shoot for pretentiousness but invariably land somewhere between painful and pitiable, like when he answered my question ("How long does it usually take you to make those beaded necklaces?") with, "Well, most of the time they're always handmade, so you have to figure the odds on that." What?

I snapped at him today ^{after} he woke me up, but I was angry because I'm tired of hearing his weird, random cartoon-villain cackling out of nowhere and seemingly at nothing; I'm tired of the constant chirping and hissing above me ^{as} he whispers to himself for hours, emphasizing all the "S", "Sh", and "Ch" sounds. I got upset because, well,

he's very flamboyantly gay and won't stop trying to entice me, originally with blatant "whoa-hoo!" whistles that I quickly put a stop to, and now more with comments like "no offence, but with your body you should really be a model," or "when you comb your hair that way you look like a pro skateboarder" (??), all come-ons he clearly thinks are slick, subtle seductions but which really are just ~~clay~~ cloying and gross. I showed anger today because I really don't like his creepy habit of copying almost everything I think or say or do, which he no doubt believes creates some common ground but in reality only makes me nauseous (a sense he'd probably also mimic if he knew I felt it). My frustration today had far less to do with his waking me up than with my months of resentfully and disgustedly watching ~~him~~ ^{him} cobble together that ridiculous Bare-like Covid mask he's forever ~~tacking~~ ^{tacking} additions onto like incoherent new rooms at the Winchester Mystery House, an absurdity now some six foul layers thick (including one he calls "polyurethane" but which I'm sure is just the cardboard bill of a dissected baseball cap), ~~adorned with a multitude of soft metal nosepieces mostly attached nowhere near the nose.~~ ^{nowhere near the nose.} My irritation metastasized into the anger this morning probably partly due to his frequent gratuitous wearing of that contraption inside the cell, then trying to talk through the disquieting monstrosity and forcing me to tell him (over and over again), "I'm sorry, I just can't understand anything you're saying," because his muffled muttering sounds exactly like one of the trombone-voiced adults in a Charlie Brown cartoon.

See, the problem wasn't that he woke me up; it's all of this, and the bottom line is, I just don't like being around him, hearing about, I dunno, the "massive titanium plates" in his miraculously unscarred legs, or the "65 million dollars" his ex-cellmate has waiting for him. I'm tired of having my own mental space muddied and mucked up by the overflow from his incessant splashing around in the stagnant pool of that shabby fantasyland his mind inhabits, and I just simply want him gone — a fact I'm having a harder and harder time concealing. I hate that he hasn't already moved yet, particularly since he put himself here, with me, entirely for his own convenience, and although I may have done the same had I been in his shoes, I also would've found somewhere else to go as quickly as possible, if I was aware I was causing an imposition. This guy, I told him the first day that I wanted to be alone and that if we'd talked first, I'd have suggested he find someone else. He knows, but today... today I let my resentment really show, and I feel like crap because of it. I regret hurting his feelings, especially since I know he really was trying to be quiet and a considerate cellmate. I hate that I let my frustration make me act like a jerk, causing him to feel bad. Now I feel bad too, and here I am, stuck like a scolded kid sent to his room to think about how to be a better person next time.

Under the circumstances, I'm afraid the path is regrettably unclear to me. ☹️