



QUARANTINED WITH A COVIDIOT

BY JANE MUNDY

Think about sharing the same cell in prison or a cabin on a cruise ship with the most loathsome individual you know. I only have myself to blame for two weeks of quarantine hell during the coronavirus crisis.

I met Dave when we both lived in Victoria. We hadn't seen each other for several decades but kept in touch on Facebook. Early March, Dave posted that he had to (temporarily) return to Victoria in April and needed someplace to crash. I'm a travel writer and had a few European press trips lined up, so I offered my house in exchange for a

very reasonable month's rent, thinking I would be gone for all but a few days he was here. You know what happened to those trips.

Dave promised that he was house-trained, a competent cook, would do some heavy lifting in the garden and was animal-friendly. Only the latter turned out to be true. Before his arrival I stocked up on groceries and booze, knowing that we both had to self-isolate for 14 days.

Day 1 We discuss a few house rules. "I'll cook and you do the dishes. Of course, if you want to cook, reverse roles," I say. "If there's anything you need, my friend will do a food or booze

run. As you know, we have to social distance, but maybe take my dog Lizzy for walkies." Dave is OK with that.

Day 2 Dave comes back from a morning walk with a Slurpie and a bag of groceries. "What part of quarantine don't you understand?" I ask.

Day 3 Echoing Dr. Bonnie Henry, I need to remind Dave to remember three words: wash your hands. I place hand sanitizers at the front and back doors. Apparently, this is too much direction for someone who has self-isolated for several years in Mexico. ▶

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Days 4-8 The cooking arrangement is not working. His idea of doing the dishes after I cook is to put *his own* plate, knife and fork in the dishwasher. So much for house-trained.

Day 9 Nor is Dave toilet-trained. He leaves the seat up, again. And a wet towel on the bathroom floor. I calm down by cooking for several hours, then clean up everything except for our dinner plates and cutlery and retire to my bedroom with Lizzy.

Day 10 Last night's dinner plates are on the counter. "The dishwasher was full," he says. I check that the faucet is still running and I haven't run out of dish soap.

Day 11 Dave announces he will cook steak tonight. He writes a grocery list and I add a bottle of gin. After firing up the barbecue that afternoon, Dave spends a few hours making his "famous sauce" and grills the steaks. I join him for cold roast potatoes (I don't eat meat). No sign of the sauce.

Day 12 I come home with Lizzy early afternoon and notice the barbecue cover chucked on the deck. The barbecue is still on, every burner at high! Storming into the house, I tell Dave.

"Wow, I could have burnt the house down," he says.

I take a deep breath and remind him he only has two days before I need him out. He grunts and shuffles outside in his new puffy coat that arrived in the mail.

We spend the next two days in silence.

Day 15 I return from a morning dog walk as Dave is heading out, just like any other morning.

"Well, it's been two weeks and we made it through alive," I quip, cheerily. "Are you all packed?"

"Waddya mean?"

I raise my voice with each word. "Quarantine is over. Remember I said you could only stay two weeks? That's today, buddy."

"But I don't have anywhere to go," he says.

"Stay with one of your friends you've been visiting." Then it dawns on me. Nobody else would put up with him.

"If you'd told me before that you were going to throw me out, I would have taken my chances and stayed in Mexico," he says. By now, my temper is hotter than the barbecue. "I don't care where you go. Just Get Out. NOW!"

I hear him making a few phone calls from his room, and then the front door slams.

Hallelujah! That's when I notice he didn't leave the rent. Of course.

Deciding it was a small price to pay, I turn on my "kitchen dance party" playlist full blast, so happy to be alone. 🐾