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## There's no place like home

by Richard Wilding

*I never washed up the dishes.* Again, not true. I did wash them up, but I didn't hold by her rule that they had to be washed up straightaway. I was perfectly content to have them sitting around for a day or two. What was the harm in that? We were both out at work, busy lives, etc. We never got mice. And when I did wash them up, apparently I didn't wash them up to her exacting standards. The water I used wasn't hot enough. Or I used too much Fairy Liquid. Or not enough. There was one Saturday afternoon when I heard her shriek and I thought, my god, what's happened. I rushed off the toilet where I'd been reading Bill Bryson and minding my own business but all it was was, she'd taken a drink from a glass and the glass 'stank of dirty dishcloth'. How is that even possible? "I'll wash it up my bloody self!" she screamed at me, as if I'd failed in some business-critical task. I went back to the loo, locked myself in, and read a whole section on plate tectonics, which I found very moving.

*I never allowed the heating on* Guilty as charged. I didn't like the heating on. It made the flat stuffy. The flat was small – one bedroom: large enough for a double bed, a wardrobe, a chest of drawers, two bedside cabinets and a single wooden chair with a chintz seat cover that I was forbidden to sit on in case I broke it "with my fat arse." A living room with sofa in dark green velvet, comfy chair in leatherette, a wall-mounted telly and shelves where we had her books on one shelf in random order and with the spines all cracked and mine on another, properly organised starting with Bill Bryson on the left all the way to TH White's *Once and Future King* on the right, each book correctly treated.

Also the speakers for music which she also fought over. We had venetian blinds that were wonky and she never repaired (why should I have repaired them? I was a senior manager with a busy workload and needed to relax and have downtime when I got home and besides it was her flat). There was a rug with a swirly pattern on the floor that would never stay in the same place. I was always having to readjust it, line it up with the walls, etc. The kitchen was small – just room for a small table with two chairs, one of which I was grateful to be able to sit on and which I never once broke. We had a cooker and a microwave and a fridge freezer. We'd always spoken about getting a Smeg but there was never the time. I'd still like one but to be honest it's not the top of my list of things to do right now, is getting a new fridge.