

Room of His Own

Sitting on his bed, Andrew slowly inhaled a deep breath through his nose then exhaled a contented sigh out of his mouth. He let his eyes slowly move around the room, examining everything in detail for the ten thousandth time. The room was a calming beige with white trim. It was clean, very well organized, and most importantly of all, private.

He had grown up in the chaos and squalor of huge impoverished family in a small house on the outskirts of a shabby village. He shared a bedroom with seven brothers while his three sisters were in the room next door. They all fought constantly over the use of the bathroom. Andrew was not an *Alpha* type person. At all. More like a Zeta. When he finally got his turn and locked the bathroom door so that he could evacuate his bowels in private, one of the older brothers would invariably pick the lock, then bang the door open while the younger brothers and sisters would stand in the doorway and laugh at his embarrassment. He was somewhere in the middle, age wise, so he always got picked on by all of the older kids and on some occasions, by the younger ones as well. The noise was almost continuous. Even in the dead of night there would be someone getting up to go to the bathroom or others snoring and/or passing gas. He had to share a bed with two younger brothers who squirmed

constantly. And Andrew was a light sleeper. So, he went through life in a constant state of fatigue.

At the dinner table it was like eating with feral dogs. Food would be stolen off his plate by the older kids, even the girls, while the younger kids often threw food at him. So, he also went through life with a less than full stomach and food-stains on his clothes. Andrew was not a scrapper. It just wasn't in his nature to fight for anything. At school it wasn't any better. He plodded along through his misery. He longed for order and cleanliness, but it was not to be. He yearned to be left alone. But fate had not set him on that path. He lived in the center of a maelstrom of dirty, messy, un-aloneness.

That is why he now luxuriated in his small room. It was not fancy or ornate, but those things were meaningless to him. He did not possess a lot of material things which was fine by him. That made it easier to keep everything well organized and clean. He had a small book collection, a few writing materials, a single bed, and some shelves to put his clothes on. A small window let in the daylight and gave him a view of rolling hills with woodlands. A view he rarely looked at. He had no pictures or mementos, as there was *nothing*, he wanted to remember from his past. He even had a small TV that he could turn on and off as he liked and watch whatever program his heart desired with regard to no one else.

It was usually pretty quiet although occasionally various of his neighbors would get noisy. He had no trouble tuning it out. He would just concentrate on the cleanliness, the organization, and above all the privacy. He never talked to any of his neighbors. As a matter of fact, he didn't talk to anyone. He just stayed in his room and enjoyed his dream environment.

Around noon (although he did not have a timepiece in his room), Andrew heard two sets of footsteps approaching his room rolling a cart. He quickly focused on his books and tuned out the intruders. He also tuned out the sound of the tray being slid through a slot in the door. As the two aides moved on, the senior one spoke to the trainee. "That is Andrew. In the wee hours of the morning on Christmas day, when he was sixteen, he poured gas all around his home. Then he burned it down with his entire family inside. He has not spoken a word since". Andrew tuned that out as well.