

**A Polite Reminder** by Christopher Peter

*Monday*

Mary –

1. Switch off radio and TV (before you leave for work in the morning please).
2. Wash up your breakfast things (ditto).
3. Feed the cat (ditto).
4. Phone the plumber (at work if you like).
5. Do your washing etc. (remember it's Monday, so please do TONIGHT).
6. Tidy your stuff away in the bathroom.
7. Dave called – can you call him back.

Cheers, Roger.

*Tuesday*

Roger – I told you I had a big deadline this week – off very early and not back till late, probably won't see you until the weekend (in fact, probably have to go in Saturday as well!). Re your list ...

1. Strange request. Why would I leave them on?
2. Done. (I do have to leave very early; I might not always leave the kitchen spotlessly clean – but I will always do it in the end, OK?)
3. Done (not sure why you can't do this before you leave for work, but there you go).
4. What plumber? Why?
5. Didn't get round to this. Back very late as you know. Have put a load on today, will sort out when I get home.
6. What stuff? I don't have that much do I?
7. When hell freezes over.

See you at the weekend! – Mary.

*Wednesday*

1. Last Friday I was woken around 11am by Radio 1 at ceiling-shattering volume. You must have left it on snooze or something. Just please try to remember, OK?
2. You say 'done'. The table was covered in milk and crumbs and you hadn't turned the dishwasher on. I know you're busy but please try to make the effort.
3. You know very well that Howard is always still out when I go to work, and also that he likes his food fresh. I always leave the can out; all you have to do is bung it in the bowl.
4. Remember, you broke the shower. Our usual plumber is AAAA1 Water Guy, number on the fridge.
5. Monday, Wednesday, Friday are your washing days; Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday are mine. Sunday is open for negotiation. I couldn't do mine today because the machine was stuffed with your pink-hued underwear. Please do keep to your allotted days in future?
6. Yes, dear, you do. Trust me. Please do keep it tidied away. Some days it looks like the aftermath of a brawl in a tart's boudoir in there.
7. I've taken at least four messages in the last week. If you aren't keen, just tell the poor guy?

Cheers, Roger.

## *Thursday*

Roger – it's always such a joy to read your notes, they make my life complete. Whilst I really do have better things to do than write pointless lists (like work and a life, for instance), I do think your latest missive deserves a response.

1. I assure you I did not leave the radio on snooze. I don't even know how you do that. I know you work night shifts, but I am not here during the day so I can't be held responsible for whatever disturbs your beauty sleep.
2. I really do think if we're going to be housemates you need to loosen up a bit. You make it sound like I left the kitchen like a war zone. Please get some perspective.
3. Needless to say, I do prostate myself at the proud paws of the discerning Howard. It has always been and will always be my proudest and most humbling duty to tend to the culinary needs of this most excellent feline. (From a tin.)
4. For the fifty thousandth time, I did NOT break the shower. I don't know what happened, but it was NOT me. And besides, you're the one here during the day – isn't it much easier for you to phone the plumber and arrange a time? ('Water Guy' – sheesh.)
5. Indulge me, I'm curious. Why do we need three wash days each per week anyway? Will you have to go about naked on Wednesdays because of my callous disregard for the laundry schedule? Or (long shot, this) perhaps you have enough clothes to tide you over until today?
6. Oh give me a break. My 'stuff', as you call it, is usually lost amid the clutter of your stomach-churning aftershave, twisted toothpaste tubes and the pubic hair pebble-dashing the bottom of the bath.
7. Can you tell him? Please?

## *Friday*

Mary –

1. Oh, I see. The radio turned ITSELF on did it? (Note to self: e-mail Sony to congratulate them on their ground breaking development of artificial intelligence in budget portable radios.) Or maybe I sleepwalked down and did it myself. Or perhaps it was Howard, deciding he fancied a spot of Katy Perry. Compared to these compelling explanations, the chances of you accidentally leaving the radio on after dozing off over your late night takeaway are, obviously, vanishingly small.
2. Please forgive me. I am now a reformed character, cured from the contemptible disease of being unreasonably fixated on the concept of a tolerably clean and hygienic place in which to prepare and consume food. How do I prove I have thus 'loosened up'? Shall I empty the contents of the bin onto the kitchen table, perhaps?
3. There is no need for sarcasm.
4. I did not break the shower. Howard was too busy listening to the radio. You are one of the clumsiest people I have ever met (remember the pepper mill?). Just admit it and call the damn plumber, there's a good girl.
5. I do not have many clothes. I keep an economic wardrobe, and I like to keep on top of my laundry. I realise that you have enough clothing to sink a battleship (or at least clothe its entire crew) but we are not all that extravagant.
6. Have you been on the chardonnay again, love? The only pubic hairs in the bath are yours, along with the long, black, sticky twisted strands that conspire to block up the plughole with monotonous regularity.
7. Who the hell am I – your PA? Your relationship guru? Tell him yourself. I'm not getting involved.

*Saturday*

Roger (I'm working today, as predicted) –

1. I checked the radio in question. It does have a snooze function – for a maximum of sixty minutes. It is not possible for me to have – accidentally or otherwise – set it to go off several hours after I'd left for work. So you can stick that theory somewhere the sun is extremely unlikely to shine (along with the radio).
2. Since you appear unable to comprehend the vast rational middle ground between a psychotically anal obsession with totally sterile perfection on the one hand, and emptying the bin over the table on the other, I will give up trying to explain the concept to you.
3. There is every need for sarcasm.
4. Oh for heaven's sake. The pepper mill again? I break ONE thing in two months and you just can't let it go can you?
5. There are many words I might choose to describe your wardrobe. 'Economic' is one of the kinder ones.
6. You know, I really wish I could partake of some chardonnay before reading one of your lists. About half a bottle should do it.
7. I called Dave and told him the truth. I thought it would be hard to be cruel to him, but I just pretended he was you and that made it easier. So, in a roundabout kind of way, you were helpful. Anyway, I'm seeing Sean tonight – aka 'Water Guy'. Not a wasted call after all.

*Sunday*

'Um ... hi Roger.'

'Oh ... hi Mary. Er ... how's work been this week? Did you meet that deadline?'

'Well, the deadline's the end of this week. We're on track, but there's a few more days of long hours to come. Terrific.'

'Oh dear, poor you. Look ... Mary, about those notes ...'

'It has been a pretty hellish week ...'

'Yes, yes, I understand that. Hey, thanks for calling the plumber ...'

'No problem at all. Err ... look, some of things I wrote ...'

'Please, it's not ...'

'No, really. I was just a bit cranky ...'

'I understand ...'

'And you're really not that anal ...'

'Well, I know I can be. Look, Mary, I really appreciate ... you know, everything.'

'And I really like living here, Roger, I really do.'

'Good. It's good to have you.'

*Monday*

Mary: please ...

1. Put the bin out (blue this week – fortnightly collection – please don't forget)
2. Do try not to slam the front door when you go out.
3. Take your empty wine bottles to the bottle bank.
4. Phone the vet (Howard's poorly).
5. Unblock the toilet (what did you try to flush down there last night? No, don't tell me).
6. You still owe me last month's rent?
7. Sean called – can you call him back

Cheers, Roger.