
When Genna Met Sally

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How Home Sharing Might Start

Chapter 1

Genna, 64, had lived in her four-bedroom home for more than twenty years. She bought it with her then husband and when they divorced she got the house. Now she was an empty-nester with children living far away. She was tired of rattling around in the house all by herself. Though she'd gotten used to it, there were times when she simply wished for company and help. It was a big job taking care of the house by herself. She's considered selling and moving to an apartment. But apartments are expensive and the house was almost paid off.

The idea of having someone live with her was suggested by a friend. It had some appeal but seemed very risky. How do you get rid of someone once they've moved in? How do you know if it is going to work? How do you start? What's important to consider?

She turned to the Internet and googled "how to find housemate" and one of the sites listed was the Sharing Housing website. As she browsed she discovered the book, *Sharing Housing: A Guidebook for Finding and Keeping Good Housemates* and the workbook. She bought them.

She read the book quickly. It was an easy read and gave her lots of tips and ideas about what to consider when screening a potential home-mate. The workbook sheets took longer—especially the ones for clarifying what she must-have and can't-live-with in her home. She thought it would be easy but it wasn't. Some things were. She knew she couldn't live with a smoker or a cat. She knew she had to be able to have her hot bath at night. Since there was one bathroom with a tub this was important. She liked things to be neat and tidy. Beyond that, every time she thought of a "must-have" she realized it wasn't so critical and could think of ways in which it wouldn't be a must-have.

Genna began to put the word out to her circle of friends that she was looking to find someone to live with.

At church one Sunday, one of those friends, Alice, was catching up with Sally at coffee hour. Sally used to come all the time but hadn't been around recently. As they talked Sally was open about the stress she was feeling. In a month her youngest child was going off to college. It meant she would be living alone in her three-bedroom house and she would lose the child support from her ex-husband and with it the financial cushion that helped pay the mortgage. On her own she barely made enough to keep the house. She knew she should sell the house, but she hated to do it. She couldn't see herself living



in an apartment. Also, it would mean leaving town since there were few rentals available.

Alice asked Sally if she had ever considered sharing housing with someone as a way to manage.

“Yes!” said Sally. “I’ve often played with the idea. When we get together with my friends from my college we talk about how we should buy a house together in our retirement. I actually asked one if she wanted to move here, but she didn’t want to leave her community. I feel the same way.”

Alice said, “I have an idea. Do you know Genna?”

Sally said, “No.”

Alice looked around the room and spotted Genna talking in a group. “I see her. Let me go and get her so that I can introduce you two.” Alice walked across the room and when she arrived at the group Genna greeted her with a questioning look as it was obvious that Alice had a purpose in mind.

Alice, “I’ve just been talking with Sally. I don’t think you know each other. She’s struggling with housing and I thought that maybe you should talk to her about your plans. Who knows? Maybe she’s someone you could have as a home-mate. Come meet her.”

Alice and Genna walked over to Sally and Alice introduced the two women. Alice drifted away and Sally and Genna had a get-to-know-you conversation. They learned where they both lived and how long they’d each been married. They discovered that they had each gotten divorced in the same year. Their children weren’t the same age so they hadn’t been in school together but they had gone to the same high school. There was a particular teacher who had been a favorite of their children. As they are talked they sized each other up.

Genna, who liked what she was feeling, looked at Sally inquiringly and said, “I’ve been looking for someone to share my house with me. Alice seemed to think you might be interested...”

She watched Sally’s face brighten as she said, “Yes!” and then her voice faltered and her face collapsed. “It’s such a big deal, I’d have to sell my house, get rid of all my stuff.” She looked as if the world’s weight was on her shoulders. Genna wanted to hug her to console her.

Genna said, “I’m not in a rush. It’s important to me that I’m happy and comfortable with whoever moves in. I agree it’s a big deal to move, especially with a house sale



involved. We can work something out if we decide that we are compatible enough to live together.”

Sally said hesitatingly, “I know I need to do something. I just hate change. I want to crawl into my bed, pull the covers over my head, and wait for it to be over. But I can’t do that.” She straightened her shoulders. “What’s your house like?”

“It’s four bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms. I’ve put together an announcement describing the house and what I’m looking for in a home-mate. Why don’t I send it to you? If you like what you read and want to explore it more, you can come see the house and we can talk some more. It’s possible you’ll not like the house at all. I love it, though the truth is some of my furniture has seen better days and some of the rooms could use a coat of paint. I just can’t afford to hire someone to do it and don’t have the energy to do it all by myself.”

Sally, “I love to paint. Really. It’s true.” She smiled at Genna. Genna smiled back.

Genna, “Why don’t we do this? I want you to see the announcement I’ve put together. I spent a lot of time working on it to get it right. When you read it you’ll know the basics of what I’m looking for. If it seems good to you then let’s get together to talk some more. How does that sound?”

Sally agreed and they exchanged contact information.



Anticipation and Cold Feet

Chapter 2

As the doorbell rang, Genna looked around her home. She thought she hadn't seen it looking so good in a very long time, not since the last time she had had visitors. She'd been putting things away and cleaning for the better part of a week knowing that Sally was coming. That was her at the doorbell. Genna was nervous and hopeful.

Sally was coming to see the house and they were going to talk about whether they might live together. They had met at church, introduced by another church member who knew that Genna was looking for a home-mate and that Sally was stressed about her finances.

Since then, Genna had emailed Sally the announcement she had put together that described both the space and what she was looking for. She reread it before she sent it. Hard to believe that it had taken so many drafts to get to this simple statement. The part she most particularly wanted Sally to see were the financial details.

“Two rooms, private bath on second floor of remodeled farmhouse. Large kitchen, family room. Close to public transportation. Older woman seeking same to share home, some meals. I'm an active church member and volunteer, love to play bridge, retired insurance broker. You would be mature, independent and friendly. No cats (allergies). A dog possible. Fenced-in back yard. No smoking. \$650 including all utilities. Security deposit and last month's rent required, as are references.”

Sally had responded that the announcement looked fine to her and asked when she could come and see the house.

That's when Genna suddenly got cold feet. She was surprised with herself. She'd been actively pursuing the idea of having a home-mate and now that she'd actually met someone — from her own church no less — she was having all sorts of thoughts about ways in which it could go wrong. It was keeping her awake at night.

She reread her worksheets where she had listed all the reasons why she wanted to do this. She went back to the [Sharing Housing website](#) where she had bought the book and workbook. She noticed the [Compatibility Questions](#) and the PDF [What To Talk About When Interview a Potential Home-Mate](#). She read the description carefully. If they both did the answered the Compatibility Questions they could compare their answers. Maybe this would be a way that she could know ahead of time if Sally and she were a good match



and could live together. She decided to give it a try. She bought it.

Genna was amused as she filled out the Compatibility Questions. They weren't hard. They were different from what she expected. They were all focused on how she lives in her home. She took her time answering. Each item had a space for comments and she wanted to be thorough as she considered each item.

She emailed Sally and asked her to get her own copy of the questions. That way when they sat down to talk they could compare their answers. They made a date for the following Saturday.

Here it was Saturday and Sally was at the door.



House Tour

Chapter 3

Genna opened the door. “Hello, hello, welcome, welcome” she said to Sally as she held the door open and Sally stepped into the house. She smiled and said, “Hi, it’s good to see you.”

Sally looked around. She was standing in a large open bright space. To her right was a sitting area with two couches, a coffee table, and an easy chair. Large windows on two sides flooded the room with light. Straight ahead of her was a baby grand piano. To her left was a dining room table with a Chinese paper lantern over it. A doorway at the far side of the room lead to another room that looked like it might be the kitchen.

She walked over to the piano and pressed some keys. Genna said, “It’s way out of tune. It was my mother’s, she gave it to me when my kids were little so that they would learn to play.”

Sally, “You don’t play it?”

“No, frankly I don’t even notice it anymore. I’m hoping that one of these years my son will settle down and then he can have it. Do you play?”

Sally nodded, “I used to. We had a piano when I was growing up but I haven’t lived with a piano for many years.”

Genna, “Why don’t I show you the rest of the house? Let’s start with the rooms that would be yours if we decide to do this.”

Genna led the way behind one of the couches to a staircase in the corner of the room. As she climbed the stairs she said, “These are two rooms up here and a bathroom.” At the top of the stairs was a small hallway with three doors, one facing the stairs, another next to it, and the third opposite the second. She opened the door immediately in front of her to reveal the bathroom. “It was painted by my daughter in her teen years. You see what I mean about needing paint?” said Genna.

Sally indeed could see, the room was dark purple and there were places where the paint was peeling. She said, “I’m taking it your daughter had a purple phase?”

“Oh yes. She loved this. Fortunately she didn’t paint her bedroom purple, but I’m not sure that what she chose is much better.”

She opened another door and stepped back. Sally walked in and looked around the room. It was large, with a sloping ceiling and two big windows at the gabled end. On one side a dormer gable had been built and it also had two windows. The furniture was a bed,



bureau, and bookcases, and one wall was a painted with many colors in a sort of tie-dye pattern. The other walls were mauve.

Sally, “Yup, I think this room needs a new coat of paint! But otherwise it’s a very nice room. The big windows face east, right?”

“Yes. I’m assuming that I’ll empty out this room and the other one if you move in. You’ll have your own stuff.”

She opened the door to the last room. “This was my son’s room. I’ve cleared it out a bit more, as I have used this room as an extra guest room.”

This room shared a wall with the front room and had windows that faced west. It was slightly smaller than the first room. It too had a dormer window. These walls were white. It was furnished with a bed, computer desk, some bookshelves, and a marble-topped bureau with a curved front and elaborate carving on the legs and the edges.

Sally, “Oh my! That bureau reminds me of one my grandmother had. I always loved it. One of my cousins now has it.”

“This one was my mother’s. I inherited this and a few other pieces when she died. This is the only room in the house where I could put it, so my son used it. I guess I’m going to have to sell it if you move in,” her voice trailed and then she looked at Sally and said hopefully, “Unless you want to use it?”

Sally, “I’d love to, at least I think so. Oh the whole moving thing, I’m exhausted just thinking about it!”

Genna, “Me too. Remember when we could move by putting all our things in a car?”

“Oh yes. I once moved with all my things in a Dodge Dart. There wasn’t much room for me. The stereo that took all the room along with the records. Oh those records. They were so heavy.”

“Dodge Dart? I remember those. My first car was a VW bug. I loved that car. It was red. Where were you moving to?”

“Philadelphia. My first job after college. I ended up living in Philly for fifteen years before moving here. Met my husband there, started our family.”

While they were talking Sally was surveying the room. She asked, “Are there any closets? I don’t see any in this room.” Genna, “There’s one in the other room. It’s not



very big, I'm afraid."

"Well, that's a problem." She stood quietly and turned slowly all the way around. "I really like the feeling of this room, both these two rooms. I'm trying to see them with the right paint on the walls and my stuff. I like how this section of the house feels separate from the rest. Where is your room?"

"Downstairs off the dining room. Let me show you the rest of the house."

They went back down the stairs. As they turned, Genna thoughtfully said, "There's a closet under these stairs. I use it for odds and ends. If I can find a place to put all those things, you could have this closet in addition to the one upstairs." She opened the door and they both looked in. It was a deep closet with shelves on one side.

"Yes," said Sally "that would certainly help."

She followed Genna through the living room, past the front door and into the space with the dining room table. Genna waved her hand towards an open door on the other side of the table. "My room is there. It was an addition put on by the previous owners. I have a bathroom and quite a lot of space. My TV is in there and a chaise lounge that I use a lot. There's also a door out to the garden. Honestly, the only rooms I really use in the house are my room and the kitchen. Here's the kitchen."

They walked through the dining room into a large kitchen. On their left was a windowed nook with a table. A bench ran along the back side facing the kitchen and two chairs faced each other at the head and foot of the table. On their right, a small kitchen island separated them from the fridge, sink and stove — each of them on their own wall with counters connecting them. The kitchen was spotless.

Genna, "On the other side of the kitchen is a laundry room and a half-bath. And that's it, the whole house." She paused. They looked at each other for a moment and were silent. Then Genna asked, "Would you like a cup of tea? I thought we'd sit in here and talk. That is, if you like the house enough to continue? "

"Tea would be great, thanks. I do like the house and this kitchen. Do you like to cook?"

"I used to. I find that I'm lazy about cooking for myself. It's so much easier to grab a yogurt or a bowl of cereal. Sometimes I'll make a big pot of something and then eat it for the week. This is actually one of the reasons I started thinking about having someone live here. I'd like to share meals occasionally, like I said in my announcement. Speaking of which let's talk about our answers to the Compatibility Questions. I have a feeling that if



we talk about all those items we'll have a very good idea of whether we can live together. Would mint tea be okay?"

"Love mint tea. I have to go get my answers which are in my bag that I left by the door."

Sally returned with her bag, reached in and pulled out her pages. She sat down on at the table on the bench with her back to the window. Genna placed two mugs of tea on the table, and sat down in a chair at the end with her answers in front of her. At her side, Sally could see she also had papers held together with a binder clip. Reading the title upside down it said, *What to Talk About When Interviewing a Potential Home-Mate*.

Sally, "Great. So how do we begin?"



Their Exploratory Conversation

Getting ready for their conversation, Genna settled into the chair at the head of the table and said, “How about we start at the beginning and work our way through the items. We can talk about each one as we go. What did you say for the first item, Neatness?”

“I chose, ‘Everything has a place and things get where they belong daily.’ What did you say?”

Genna, “I said that ‘things are left around for awhile.’”

Sally, “Really? This house looks so tidy!” She raised an eyebrow and looked quizzically at Genna.

Genna took a sip of tea, “I cleaned up a lot to show you the house. I always do that before guests come. In fact before you arrived I looked around and realized I hadn’t seen it so clean since Christmas, when my kids came home. I do like a clean and tidy house, but the truth is I don’t always pick up. And, honestly?” She looked at Sally, made a face and said, “I did dump some things in my room because I couldn’t figure out what to do with them.”

Sally laughed, “I’m good at figuring out where things should go. So what does it look like normally? I do like the way it looks now.”

Genna, “I get piles of things. Mail that comes in, books I’m reading. Projects I’m working on. That sort of thing. My excuse is that I’m working on them and it’s a waste of energy to put them away only to take them out again. It’s generally the dining room table and the kitchen table that I use.”

Sally, “Well it’s your house. What did you say to the next one?”

Genna takes a look at her paper, “Oh this is Cleanliness. I said ‘I dust and vacuum when I start noticing dust bunnies and gritty floors.’” What did you say?”

Sally, “I dust and vacuum on a regular schedule, at least once a week. Actually it is once a week on Saturdays. I fell into it when my kids were little and find that I like having a regular routine for cleaning. I finally found a vacuum cleaner that I love. I like the



regular routine.”

Genna, “Hmmm, I was thinking about suggesting that we could share the cost of having someone clean, maybe twice a month?”

Sally shook her head. “I don’t mind dusting and vacuuming. I’m assuming we’re talking about the rooms we’d both use? Living room and dining room? We’ll clean our own rooms, right? And bathrooms?”

“Yes, that’s what I thought. Really you don’t mind? Are you sure? You are volunteering to do this?”

Sally nodded thoughtfully and said, “Yes, the dining room and living room. I’m not volunteering to always clean the kitchen. In fact the next item is about kitchen cleanliness. My answer is that I never leave dishes in the sink, I always wash them or put them in the dishwasher. I really hate seeing dirty dishes. What did you say?”

Genna grimaced, “Uh-oh! This is our first real difference. I said I leave them in a pile and get to them when the pile is too big. And it’s true.” She looked at Sally who was staring at her paper. When Sally finally looked up the excitement that had been in her eyes was gone. She said dispiritedly, “Maybe this isn’t going to work out after all.”

Genna, incredulous, “Because of dishes?” Sally nodded.

“It used to be a battle I had with my husband. It drove me nuts how he expected me to wait on him and do all the kitchen and housework. The dishes were always a fight. I guess I’m pretty scarred. After our divorce and living on my own I’ve delighted in being able to walk into the kitchen and always find it clean.”

Genna, “That’s funny in a weird way. I have the opposite experience. For me the freedom of not being married is being able to let things go a bit. I swear my husband was one of those obsessive types.” They both took a sip of their tea. They were silent, Sally looking down and Genna looking out the window. Then Genna said, “I can’t believe dishes are a show stopper.”

Sally said softly, “Me neither. I never would have thought of it without this questionnaire. I would have seen this kitchen and assumed it is this way all the time. I just



know myself, dirty dishes would drive me nuts.”

Genna said hesitantly, “If it matters to you so much, maybe I can learn to put dishes in the dishwasher. Would that work?” She cocked her head and waited for an answer.

Sally, “Maybe. Would you really remember?”

“I think so. I did keep a very clean house while I was married. If I know it matters to you it’s much more likely that I’ll do it. And you’ve just offered to do the dusting and vacuuming.”

Sally nodded, she relaxed. “Okay. Let’s keep going and see what else we discover. We’ve only covered three items so far.” They both looked at their papers.

Sally, “The next one is about kitchen use. I said I cook almost all the time. And you?”

Genna, “That I occasionally cook a meal. Usually I cook when I invite a friend to join me. I love to have company for meals, it’s boring to eat alone, I like the conversation and companionship. For me alone it’s not so much fun to cook. I like cooking for others.”

Sally, “Me too. What do you like to make?”

Genna, “Well I guess it depends. I do love to make curries.”

Sally surprised, “Curries?” Genna nodded.

Sally, “I don’t like curry.”

Genna, “Really? That’s too bad. Is it the heat?”

Sally, “Yeah, way too hot. Actually I’ve only tried it once. I’ve managed to avoid it ever since. That one experience was really painful.”

Genna, “I wonder if you ate a pepper. Would you try one again if I made it very mild?”

Sally, “You can make it mild? I thought curries are always hot.”

Genna shook her head and asked, “What about you? What do you like to cook?”

“Let’s see. For company I love to make lasagna. It’s such a lot of work that I won’t do it for myself. I make pasta. Salads. Soups. I seem to have a knack with the soups. I guess I just cook normal stuff, nothing fancy. Lately I’ve been trying to eat less meat and more vegetarian meals. I bought myself a few cookbooks. Speaking of which that’s some



impressive collection of cookbooks you have!" She motions to a shelf she can see.

Genna looked at the shelf and said, "Yeah, actually I should get rid of a bunch of them that I never use. I do love cookbooks though I find more and more I'm looking for recipes on the internet."

"I know what you mean. Me too. We do have some of the same cookbooks. Maybe..." She stopped. "Never mind. Let's look at the next item. Oh that's about routines. What did you say to that?"

Genna, "I found this one hard to answer as I'm not used to thinking about how much I'm at home. I said I'm home half the time." She looked at Sally and waited.

"This one was easy for me. I go to work Monday through Friday. Weekends are open and can be quite different. I don't expect to retire until I can get full Social Security. Fortunately, I like my job."

"How did I miss the fact that you are working? What do you do?"

"I'm the bookkeeper and grants manager for the animal shelter. Been there for five years. I'm so grateful to have the job. Job hunting was really hard. I encountered a lot of age discrimination. When they offered me the job I couldn't believe it. It's a good group. I like it."

"That's neat. I'm surprised you haven't brought home any animal."

"Yeah, I know." She chuckled and said, "Actually when I saw that you can't have cats due to allergies, I thought 'good, I won't be tempted anymore.' But you are retired, right? What do you do when you aren't here? Oh wait, I know this. You run the food kitchen for church, don't you?"

"That's right. That's one day a week. I keep myself busy. I volunteer at the hospital. I work out at the gym. I have a regular water aerobics class. Things like that. But I'm home most evenings. That's why I'd love to share meals."

"Yes, I like the idea of sharing meals too. Just maybe not the curries? What's the next one? Oh, pets. I don't have pets, you don't have pets. We can skip this one."

"Wait, not so fast. Because I said, 'I'm willing to live with one.' The truth is I love dogs and have always had a dog. My Betsy died last year, she lived to the ripe old age of fifteen. I really miss her and I miss having a dog. I might want to have another — I keep wondering if it's a good idea. What do you say to that?"



Dogs and Holidays

Sally took a sip of tea. “That might be just fine. I see so many dogs at the shelter. Every now and then there’s a sweet older dog that is at the shelter because the owner died or had to move. I feel so sad for them. Would you adopt an older dog or were you thinking of a puppy?”

Genna, “Until this conversation I was thinking of a puppy, but I was wondering whether I really have it in me to do the whole house-training thing. Have you had a dog?”

Sally nodded. “Yes, we had a dog. My ex got Bailey in the divorce. That made sense. Bailey was really more his dog. He’d take Bailey on his run and hiking.”

“What was he?”

“German Shepard.”

“Big dog!”

“Yes and really a shedder. I didn’t mind it when I stopped having fur to vacuum up. What was yours?”

“Golden retriever. That’s a picture of her on the fridge.” Genna motioned to the fridge. She continued, “She was wonderful with kids, loved to swim. But when I think about getting a dog, I think I want one that is smaller, easier to manage.” She laughed. “I never thought I’d want a small dog, but can see the advantages.” More seriously, “But here’s the thing, I haven’t gotten a dog because taking care of one all by oneself is a big responsibility. Would you be willing to help?”

Sally smiled. “I could help, it would have to work with my schedule, etc. But I think living with a dog again would be fun. If I liked the dog that is. We could keep an eye on the dogs coming into the shelter, I could talk to my co-workers, I bet the right dog will come along.”

Genna, “Well that would be just wonderful.” She stopped. She looked at Sally in the eye. “This feels like we are going to do this. We’ll get a dog, I won’t make curry, you’ll dust and vacuum, I’ll put the dishes in the dishwasher and not leave them around. What’s



left for us to talk about?

“Only the rest of the items,” Sally countered. “Do you realize we’ve only talked through half of them?”

Genna, “I guess that right. Do you want more tea?” She stood up and picked up her cup and reached for Sally’s cup.

Sally shook her head. “No thanks. I want to skip to the questions about guests and sociability. Or maybe I don’t even need the questionnaire. I’m worried about the holidays. What do you do?”

Genna walked to the kettle and turned it on. She stood facing Sally in the kitchen. She said, “Oh holidays. It’s complicated. In the past the kids would alternate between being with me and with their dad. But it’s changing. Last year they both had other places to go and I was actually alone. That was weird. They are growing up, life changes. I always felt that I had to keep the rooms for them so they could visit anytime, especially Christmas. But last Christmas no one was here. I don’t know what will be happening in the future. What do you do?”

“Christmas was always a big deal when my girls were little. But now, Emily, my eldest daughter, lives in Japan. She hasn’t been here for Christmas for the last three years and I don’t see that changing. However, Georgia will be coming home from college for the holidays for the whole week. That’s a potential issue. I can put a bed in my second room, but how would you feel about having us in your house for the holiday?” She tilted her head a bit.

Genna emphatically, “Well it would be much better than being alone like I was last year. I made do, but it felt like I was trying too hard to make it okay with myself that I wasn’t with family. I think having your daughter and you would be fine. I’m assuming I’d like your daughter. And if my family does want to come, we’ll figure out how to find beds for everyone and how to create a Christmas for everyone. How’s that?”

“Really? Sounds perfect, almost too good to be true. Are you sure?”

“Yup. I’m also thinking that we belong to the same church, so our sense of Christmas and tradition is probably pretty similar. So I’m thinking it would work. What did you say about sociability?”

Sally looked at her answers, “That I want to be informed when guests are coming to the house. And that’s sort of true. But seeing how this house is set up it would be easy enough for me to be in my rooms and not be bothered by you having guests in here.”



She motioned towards the kitchen and dining area. “I have a feeling you like to have people drop in on you, is that right?”

“Yes, I’m usually delighted when someone shows up. Happy to switch gears and visit but it doesn’t happen often these days. It can get very quiet here. Too quiet.” Her voice trailed and there was a bit of a quaver to it. A cloud passed over her face. In a softer voice she said, “When the kids are growing you are so busy all the time taking care of them. You think it will never end. It’s so constant. Meals, school lunches, carpools, taking them to and from activities, laundry, making sure their homework is done...I was ready for it to be over and have ‘me time’ again. And for the first few years it was wonderful. But now...” She looked at Sally. “I want company. I spend too many meals eating alone. I know it’s not good for me. That’s why I started looking for someone to move in.”

Sally, “I haven’t had that experience yet. My daughter leaves next month for college. She’s so excited and I want to share her excitement but it’s hard. Here she is counting the days until she goes off to college, and I’m looking at how once she goes I will be a financially-strapped empty-nester.” She looked out the window and was silent for a moment. “Living here would certainly change the financial picture. I’d even be able to visit my daughter in Japan. And selling the house would give me a bit of financial cushion as well. But, oh dear, what am I going to do with all my stuff?”



When Genna Met Sally — Furniture and Meals

Sally shook her head as she contemplated the idea of her four bedroom house full of furniture, books, pictures and the assorted accumulation of a life lived raising children. “I’ve got so much stuff!”

Genna lifted her hands and waved them around, “Me too. It’s so easy to add stuff. I’ve got lots that I never use or even remember that I have. Having you move in would give me incentive to get rid of stuff. People say that after they do the purge they feel so much lighter.” She looked around the kitchen and then out towards the dining room and living room. “Do you have a good couch? One of the couches in the living room has broken springs and the upholstery was scratched up by a cat we once had. I’d love to replace it.”

Sally, “I love my couch. It cost me an arm and a leg. Really? You’d let me move it into the living room?”

Genna thoughtfully, “Yes, and you know I hadn’t really thought about this before but maybe we could think about combining households rather than you just moving into two rooms. It’s different, isn’t it?”

Sally nodded. “That does feel different. I like it.” She smiled. “Our tastes are similar. I think you should come to my house and we can talk about what can move here and what shouldn’t.”

“Sure, let’s do that. Hmm, how is this going to work? Are you going to sell your house? Will you wait to move in here until your house is sold? Do you think it will sell quickly?”

“I think it will be snatched up. We’re in an excellent school district and elementary school children can walk to school. That’s pretty unusual in this day and age. It’s a good family house, I’ve loved living in it.” She looked around the kitchen. She continued, “Two weeks ago I felt burdened with the house and couldn’t see any other options. Boy was I stuck! Then you came along....Amazing how much can change in a short time.”

“Uh huh, and I was worrying about having someone move in who would end up being a disaster. That’s why I decided to do the compatibility questions and ask you to do it too. Speaking of which I don’t think we’ve done it all, have we?”

Sally, “Almost all. Just a few items left. I’m amazed at how much we’ve already talked about. I guess we should complete the whole thing.”

Genna, “Do you think we can do them quickly? Find out if there are any show stoppers but save any longer conversation for another time? I see that they are mostly



about the use of media.”

Sally, “Sure.”

Genna and Sally told each other how they had responded to the questions about television, radio and music. Genna was more of a television watcher than Sally, but she had it in her room so it was unlikely to affect Sally. Sally liked to listen to classical music when she was cooking. Genna thought she could live with that.

Genna, “I hope you said you were willing to share food. Did you?”

“Yes. But I don’t really know what that means. Do we shop together and split all the costs?”

“That’s one way. Another way is do our own shopping and then make meals together out of what’s in the house. A different way is each person who is cooking supplies the food with the idea that it works out fairly because each person cooks the same number of nights.”

Sally, “Hmm... I don’t know. I think I like the idea of shopping separately and pulling together meals. It seems less complicated than the other options.”

Genna, “Me too. Let’s see how that works. We can figure out if we want to do more food sharing when we get a feel for how we live together.” She looked at her printout. “I said I’m an omnivore, I’ll eat anything. That’s largely true. Do you have any diet restrictions or preferences?”

Sally shook her head. “Just not curries.” She smiled. “I’ve been working on eating more vegetarian meals but that’s a preference not a requirement.”

Genna, “I used to be a vegetarian.”

Sally, “Really? Why did you stop?”

Genna, “I wasn’t getting enough protein. I was tired often and got sick easily. My doctor basically told me I either had to pay more attention to my protein intake or start eating meat. So I did and do. It does make a difference.”

Sally, “I have another concern. I know that having meals together is one of the reasons you started thinking about having a home-mate. And I like the idea but I also have some evenings when I’m out for meetings or to meet up with a friend. Would that



be a problem for you?”

Genna, “Oh gosh no! If we had two meals together in a week it would be better than what happens now. If you’re busy, you’re busy. And I do go out at night occasionally.”

Sally relieved, “Oh good. Speaking of being busy I promised my daughter to go shopping this afternoon. I never thought we’d talk for this long.”

“Nor I. We’ve sure covered a lot of ground. I’m feeling pretty good about the idea of living with you. I think it will work.”

“Me too. I guess that next question is when and how.” Sally frowned. “And as soon as I think about that I get overwhelmed with all that needs to happen to make it happen. I think you should see my house. Why don’t you come over to my house sometime this week? I’ll make you dinner and you can meet my daughter.”

“I’d love to. Name a day and I’ll be there.”

“Let me check with my daughter. I’d like her to be there, she’s so busy these days I need to find an evening she’ll be home.” Sally was gathering up her things as she said this.

Genna and Sally walked to the front door together. As Genna opened the door, Sally turned towards her. She said, “Isn’t it interesting that we’ve been going to the same church and never got to know each other? If I hadn’t told Alice my worries she never would have introduced us and we wouldn’t be planning on sharing housing. Amazing what a small decision does - what if I hadn’t gone to church that day? Is it luck? Or something else?”