

The Magic Washing Machine

Mum's washing machine broke down. The man who came to mend it shook his head, "I'll have to take it away," he said, "It'll take a week or two, perhaps longer. You'd better hire one in the meantime."

Dad took Tom and Ann to the big town to find a shop that hired out washing machines. At last they found a funny little shop between two big ones. The man there said he would deliver a washing machine the next day and install it for them.

Sure enough, the next day the man came with the washing machine. "It's a very special one, a magic one," he said to Mum. "It will wash and dry the clothes and then iron them and fold them ready to put away."

"Hmm!" replied Mum. She did not believe him. She looked at the machine. It had no buttons or knobs.

"How do you put it on?" she asked.

"You say, 'Please machine, do the washing' and it does. But you must remember to say 'please', or it might make mistakes."

"Hmm!" said Mum again.

The next day Mum wanted to do the washing. She put the clothes into the machine, shut the door and looked round for a button to push.

"You have to ask it to do the washing," reminded Ann.

"Machine do the washing!" said Mum.

"Mum," said Tom, "you *must* say please!"

"Please", Mum added grudgingly. She did not like saying 'please' to a washing machine.

The machine started going and Mum went off to do other jobs. But Ann and Tom stayed near the machine to see what happened. It was singing away quietly as it worked.

"Can you hear it?" whispered Ann.

"Yes," replied Tom, "but I can't hear any words."

"I do love this washing machine!" said Ann.

"So do I!" replied Tom.

Mum went back to the machine later. She was surprised to find it was just as the man said.

The clothes were all clean and ironed and ready to go away.

"Isn't that good?" asked Ann.

"I suppose so," admitted Mum grudgingly.

All was well until one day Mum put on the machine when Tom and Ann were at school. And what do you think? She did not say 'please'! She did not like saying 'please' to a washing machine.

When Ann and Tom got back they went to see the machine. It was not singing, it was sighing.

"It sounds unhappy," said Ann.

"I bet Mum didn't say 'please'," answered Tom.

When Mum took the clothes out of the machine all was not quite well. Tom's pyjama top was folded up with Dad's pyjama bottoms and one of Ann's red socks was paired with one of Tom's blue socks.

"Stupid machine!" murmured Mum as she put the washing away.

The next time the machine mixed up Dad's socks with Tom's and Ann's.

"How many different ways can it mix up socks?" wondered Tom as he helped Mum sort them out.

"Hmm!" replied Mum.

On Friday evening the repair man rang to say that their own machine was ready.

"As good as new!" he added.

"About time!" said Mum. She did not like saying 'please' to a washing machine.

"We had better find that shop where we hired this one," said Dad, "There isn't room for two of them in here."

The next day was Saturday and Dad took Tom and Ann to the big town to find the shop that had hired out the magic washing machine. The funny little shop between two big ones was not there. The two big shops were next to each other!

"Strange!" said Dad. He looked worried.

"We had better get home and try to move the machine to the shed before the other one comes back."

Mum met them at the door.

"You made a wasted journey," she said, "The man came to collect the machine soon after you set off. I'll be glad to get our own machine back," she added. She did not like saying 'please' to a washing machine.

Ann was sad.

"We didn't even have a chance to say goodbye", she whispered to Tom.

"But it was funny how it mixed up those socks!" answered Tom.