

"I'm tired of cooking and cleaning for all of you," said Mother one morning at breakfast, "so I'm going to go out and get a job." Tracy, Stacy, and Father all looked up at Mother over their breakfast bowls. "What do you mean," asked Tracy. "Who's going to iron my clothes?" "Who's going to fix my lunch?" asked Stacy. "Who's going to keep the house clean and do the laundry?" asked Father. "Well, you are going to do all of these things for yourself now," said Mother. Tracy, Stacy, and Father all looked at each other in surprise. Mother had always taken care of them, and they wondered what would happen now.

That evening when Mother came home, she gathered all of the family around her. "I am now the newest salesclerk at Sears," she said. "I'll be working from noon until eight o'clock at night every day. This means that you will all have to do your own cooking and cleaning. Stacy, you must now do the laundry at night. Tracy, the housecleaning is your job. Father, you can cook dinner every night." Mother then turned around and left the room. Father said, "Well, you heard what your Mother said. We're in charge now."

The next evening, Stacy started to do the laundry. "Hmmm, I wonder how much soap I need?" said Stacy. "I guess I'll put in three cups." After starting the laundry, she left to do her homework. Meanwhile, Tracy began to clean the house. "I'll just spray this furniture polish onto all of the furniture and dust," she said. Tracy sprayed lots of polish onto the wood. "Boy, this furniture is dirty," she said. Just then a friend called to chat. "Now, let's see," said Father as he started dinner. "I'll put the potatoes in lots of water to boil," and he did. Then, he heard his favorite TV show beginning, and he went into the den to watch it.

Thirty minutes later, Stacy looked up from her homework. "I had better check the laundry," she thought. Tracy hung up the phone and said, "Time to finish the dusting." Father looked up from his TV program. "Something sure is cooking, because I can smell it," he said and went to the kitchen to check it out.

"Oh, no!" Stacy yelled from the laundry room. "I put in way too much soap." Soap bubbles were streaming down the sides of the washing machine. "Oh, no!" yelled Tracy from the living room. "I left the polish on too long." The wood furniture was covered with little white spots. "Oh, no!" said Father from the kitchen. "I burned the potatoes." The girls came running into the kitchen to see the burned potatoes and to tell Father what they had done.

Quickly Father threw the potatoes out and started boiling more potatoes. Stacy cleaned up the bubbles and started a wash with just water. Tracy scrubbed the furniture hard until the white spots were gone. Just then Mother walked in the door. "I'm home. How are things going?" she asked. "Oh, just fine," said Tracy, Stacy, and Father. They were not going to tell Mother what they had done. This was their little secret.

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