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Literary Recount

The Smith Family Diaries



Written by Sally Odgers
Illustrated by Sandra Cammell



The Smith Family Diaries

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Washing-Machine Blues

Abigail's Version

My children drive me bananas! Just when I think my careful training is starting to pay off, they do something that makes my hair stand on end.





Today, Connor and Rebecca spilled spaghetti sauce over my grandmother's antique tablecloth. Why? They were being careless, that's why. In my opinion, children need to develop a sense of responsibility, so I decreed that they should wash out the tablecloth.

"No problem," Rebecca declared. "It wasn't my fault, but how difficult can it be to wash a tablecloth? The washing machine is entirely automatic."

"Automatic or not, washing machines neither load nor unload themselves; nor do they fold the washing and put it away," I told her. "I want a washing robot, but until that day comes..." I let my words trail off and gave the children an exasperated look.

Rebecca and Connor exchanged glances. "No problem," Rebecca repeated. "Go and relax, Ma."

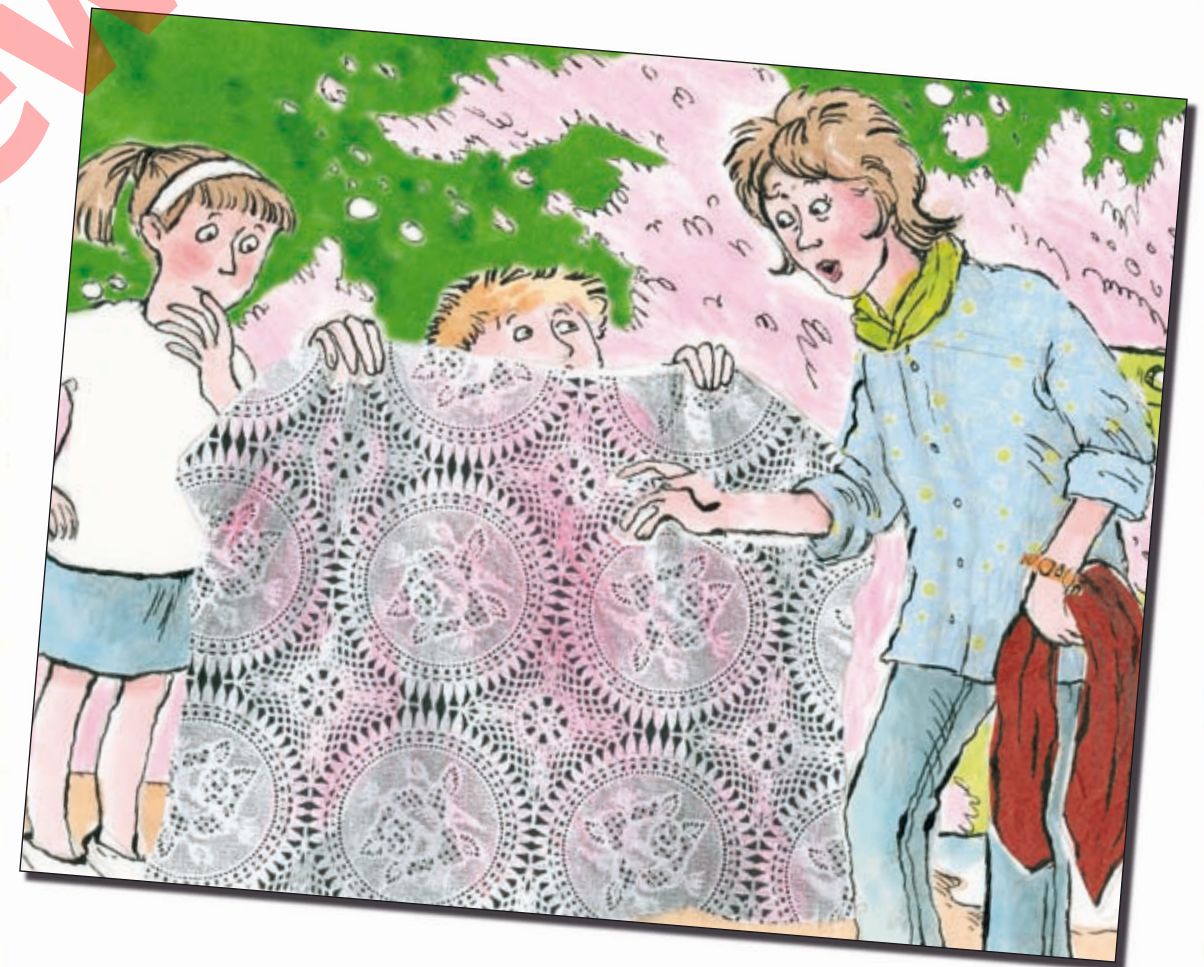
"A washing robot sounds cool," said Connor, rubbing his hands. "Let's get one."

I tried to relax. I tried not to hear the ensuing commotion when the washing machine overflowed. Unfortunately, I couldn't fail to see the mound of wet washing my offspring left piled on the sink when they suddenly and mysteriously left the house. Nor could I miss the red streaks on the "clean" washing. It appears Rebecca included a red silk scarf in the laundry, and naturally, the dye ran.

I finished the washing and mopped the floor. When the children came home to face interrogation, they informed me their brother's mobile phone had got wet, and they'd taken it to that silly Phone Focus shop.

"It wasn't my fault, but we had to get it checked," said Rebecca. "What if Bennet missed an important call and blamed us?"

I repeat, my children drive me bananas!



Rebecca's Version

Dear Diary,
Today, Ma's favourite tablecloth had an unfortunate encounter with some spaghetti sauce, but it wasn't my fault. Sure, I dared Connor to stand on his head, but I didn't tell him to do it on the table, did I?

Ma made such a fuss, I offered to wash the cloth. I didn't want to waste water and electricity, so I gathered up a few other things that needed washing.



I packed the machine scientifically, sprinkling washing powder between layers. It wasn't my fault the powder foamed up and fizzed all over the kitchen. Bubbles oozed from under the lid of the machine, then piled towards the ceiling in a tottering tower. They were pink, but I didn't know why until later.

Connor laughed like a hyena, of course, and borrowed Bennet's mobile phone to take a picture of the bubbles. Bennet has a brilliant phone that can do just about everything except swim – as we learned when Connor slipped on a patch of bubbles. The phone shot out of his hand and plopped into a puddle. Connor tried to say it was my fault for overloading the washing machine.



I turned the machine off and piled the washing on the draining board. I left it there, because Bennet's phone is more important than a load of washing. Connor and I took the phone to Phone Focus to get it checked – Phone Focus is the best shop ever.

It wasn't until we got back that I found out you shouldn't wash red silk scarves with white lace tablecloths. The tablecloth is kind of pink now, but that's not my fault, right?