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The Dryer

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The Dryer



Stephen Craig

My husband and I lived in a duplex. Actually, it was just a small house with a basement that our landlord pretended was a duplex. Another couple lived downstairs, and we lived on the top, pretending not to hear them. I was always so upset that the landlord never put a washer and dryer in the upstairs portion of the house; I was surprised by that, too, because the landlord actually used to live in that part of the house. But there weren't even hookups. The couple downstairs had a washer and dryer, and I think the owners used to work it out so they had access downstairs. My husband and I always felt like we were intruding when we asked. We weren't the owners. So after a few months we just quit asking and went to the coin laundry down the street.

The other day I came home from running some errands and discovered our two-and-a-half year old, Brian, shivering in the bathtub. I'd left him in bed with a cold—I know I shouldn't have; he's very mischievous, but he was sound asleep, and I needed

to run to Food 4 Less. Fifteen minutes later I came back and found him in the bathtub, just quaking. My husband and I always keep the bathtub full of water; he served a mission in Japan, and the people there keep their bathtubs full of water in case there's an earthquake and the taps stop working. But anyway, I came home and found Brian soaking in the bathtub, shivering, just wearing his diaper. He loves water. I shrieked to find him in there, but he just looked at me, shivering, and didn't say anything.

I ran him downstairs and frantically knocked on the door. Rebecca saw us through the glass and immediately felt the gravity of the situation.

"The dryer!" I cried. "Can we use the dryer?"

She nodded her head in the shock of the moment and pushed open the door, "Uh-huh."

I made it to the dryer in two steps, tore the door open, and threw the clothes onto the floor. That had been the biggest problem with using their dryer before; they always had something in it, and we were imposing. But this was an emergency. I pitched him in, leaving one towel in there (they say a dry towel helps soak up the moisture). I shut the door and set the timer.

"What happened?"

"Oh, I left him home sick in bed for just fifteen minutes, and I came home and found him shivering in the bathtub."

"You should have told me to keep an ear out for him."

"Yes, next time."

"Is he going to be okay?"

"It's the cold I'm worried about. He already had a cold. I can't believe I left him alone."

The dryer was the glass window kind. I think they bought it second-hand from the very laundromat my husband and I go to. We could see him tumbling around in there. During one turn he sat perfectly on the spinning cylinder, and his head stayed in

the same spot, right in the center of the window. He looked at us through the glass for that moment with just the expression on his face you would expect from a kid in the dryer.

Rebecca's little boy, Steele, came up to the dryer and watched Brian go round.

"Don't stick your nose up to the glass, honey. It's hot."

"Maybe I should have left some more of these clothes in there for padding. I just didn't want him to suffocate on any of them."

"Uh-huh."

Her little Steele put both hands up to the glass and bobbed his head around, following Brian's head.

"Honey!" She pulled him away. "It's hot!"

He let out his shrill whine. He used to keep us up sometimes at night when he was teething. Here he was, almost a year-and-a-half old, but I had never heard him say a word. He just let out shrieks and whines and laughter.

He got up to the glass, as close as his mother's foot would let him get, and bobbed his head around again. He looked up at us and laughed, showing his boxy, white teeth.

"I think he's about there, Jen."

"Just a moment more; he did have a cold."

But his hair was starting to stick up. I opened the dryer (that's how you stop it) and caught him before he hit the bottom of the cylinder for the last time. It wasn't a very graceful catch because there wasn't much room to maneuver. His diaper was still a little wet, so I stripped it off him and wrapped him in the towel.

"Is it okay if I just bring this towel back down later?"

"That's fine."

We looked at him, and his bottom lip began quivering with the sob on the way out.

"There, there. You're just a little bit startled."

The sob erupted.

I pulled him close. “It’ll be okay, honey.”

“Thank you so much. We’ll bring this towel down later.”

Steele laughed with those twinkle eyes and boxy teeth as we walked to the door. I was hoping Rebecca would mention that we hadn’t been down to use their washer and dryer and offer to let us use it anytime and say that it was no trouble. But she didn’t. I just left the clothes on the floor.