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How Lazy Laurie Became Mother's Helper

Arthur S. Maxwell

Laurie was lazy. Nobody liked to say so, least of all to Laurie, but it was true.

Whatever you asked him to do, he had the same answer ready: "I can't."

Carry in the coal? "I can't, it's too heavy." Run an errand? "I can't, I'm too tired." Dry the dishes? "I can't, that's girls' work."

None of it was true. The real trouble was plain laziness, and you could tell because Laurie only ever said "I can't" when there was work to be done. When his friend knocked at the door and asked if he wanted to ride bikes or play ball, it was always, "Sure, I'll be right there!"

His mother had told him again and again that it wasn't fair. He never helped at home, yet he was always first out the door to play. It made no difference. Laurie was exactly the same the next day.

Then one day Mother had an idea.

The next morning, Laurie stayed in bed so long that he was late for school. Usually Mother called him in good time, and a sleepy voice answered, "I can't get up, I'm too sleepy." Today she let him sleep until he woke on his own, which was very late indeed. He came downstairs cross and hungry and wanted his breakfast at once.

There wasn't any.

"Why didn't you make my breakfast?" he asked.

"I can't," said Mother, with a curious little smile. "I'm so tired."

Laurie stomped off to school with an empty stomach. He was so late that he got two demerits, which made him crosser still.

On the way home, he climbed a fence with some other boys and snagged his trousers on a rusty nail. He wriggled free, but left a good piece of the seat behind. As soon as he got home, he wanted Mother to mend them.

"I can't," said Mother. "I'm too busy."

"But I'll have to go to school like this!"

"I'm afraid so," said Mother. And go he did, to the great amusement of every boy

in his class.

By suppertime, Laurie was starving. But the table was bare. He was astonished. Supper had always just appeared.

“You haven’t made supper,” he said.

“No,” said Mother, hardly looking up. “I can’t. I’m tired, and the lunch dishes aren’t even washed.”

“But I want to go out and play right after!”

“All right,” said Mother, settling deeper into her armchair and returning to her book. “I don’t mind.”

“But aren’t you going to get me any supper?”

“I can’t. I’m tired.”

Laurie stormed out and slammed the door. But halfway down the street, he began to think. Maybe Mother really was tired. Maybe she needed help. Maybe she truly couldn’t manage supper on her own.

He stopped. He thought about the ball game waiting for him. Then he thought about his small mother at home, too tired to cook. He felt sorry he had been so cross. He turned around.



Through the kitchen window, he saw that Mother had fallen asleep in her chair. At heart, Laurie was a good boy, even if he did have a serious weakness where work was concerned. This was his chance to put things right.

He crept in on tiptoe and washed every dish as quietly as he could. Then, even more quietly, he tiptoed into the dining room and set the table. It was the first time in months, but he did a splendid job. He found the nicest plates, picked flowers from the garden, and made the table look as though someone very special was coming to dinner.

Then he realized he’d forgotten the butter dish. He hurried to fetch it, but it was a little greasy, and it slipped out of his hands and smashed on the floor.

Mother woke with a jump, as though something dreadful had happened. She had been dreaming about Laurie in trouble, and the crash came at exactly the wrong moment. But when she saw what he had done, her fright turned to joy.

“Well!” she said. “Who would have believed it!”

They had a lovely supper together, and Mother never said a word about the butter dish. Laurie felt so happy that he decided he really would help more from now on.

Just as they finished, someone knocked at the door. “Come on, Laurie, we’re all waiting!”

“Sorry, I can’t come,” said Laurie. “I’m helping Mother tonight.”

Mother heard, and came to the door. “It’s all right, Laurie, just this once. You can help me tomorrow.”

Laurie raced off, and it was the best game of ball he ever played.

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