

Mom Quits Cleaning

by Elizabeth Trach

Arthur was messy. He didn't try to make messes, but he didn't try to clean up much, either. There were always crumbs on the table when he was done eating. His socks never made it into the hamper. And he only picked up his toys when Mom threatened to throw them away.

Most days, Mom followed Arthur around the house and cleaned up after him. She brushed the crumbs into her hand and threw them away after meals. She picked up his socks and made sure they got washed, dried and folded neatly before going back in the drawer. She often picked up his toys when he left them to do something else.

One day, Mom asked Arthur to pick up his toy trains. "Not right now," Arthur said. He was reading a comic book. The trains had been on the living room floor since the morning.

"You know what, Arthur? I'm not going to ask you again. I'm done cleaning today." And with that, Mom put her feet up on the sofa and picked up a book to read.

At dinner time, Arthur noticed that there was a big pile of crumbs at his place at the table. Mom's spot was nice and clean. Arthur didn't like the crumbs very much.

After dinner, Arthur's feet felt cold. He went to his room and opened his drawer, but the drawer was empty. "Mom, where are my socks?" Arthur called.

"There weren't any socks in your hamper, so I didn't wash them," Mom said.

Arthur frowned. Now his feet would be cold, unless he wanted to wear dirty socks from the floor. He decided to stay barefoot.

When it was time for bed, Arthur said good night to Mom and turned to go upstairs. He stepped right on his toy train in his bare feet. "Ouch!" cried Arthur. "That really hurt!"

Mom was still reading. Arthur wasn't sure if she had heard him or not. She didn't say anything. Arthur quietly picked up the train and put it in the toy box. It only took a minute for him to put the toy away, and now he wouldn't have to worry about hurting his feet again.

"Mom?" said Arthur. "Tomorrow can you show me how to do the laundry so I can wash my socks?" Arthur didn't want to wait until the next laundry day to have clean socks again.

"Of course," said Mom. Arthur felt better already. Maybe being neat wasn't so hard after all.

Questions

1. What kind of person is Arthur?
2. Why do you think Mom quits cleaning?
3. What lesson does Arthur learn?
4. Do you think Arthur will be a neater person in the future? Why or why not?