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I HOPE THERE WON'T BE ANY CALLERS. I have so much work to do and the day will be gone so quickly. The sun is a stranger most days now and it is a shame to miss a good day's drying. Will I ever be able to get the big wash and Sonny's diapers done as well? Not with all the outside chores... still I must try. It is a blessing that Joe Beaton is going to spend the day at Dougall's and not here, in my kitchen like he usually does. I hate washing diapers in front of a bachelor. How many times have I had to gather everything up in a rush and hide them in the pantry • any place to get them out of sight, when one of the Beatons or MacTavish's calls unexpectedly. How shocked my sisters would be if they could see me now! A pile of dirty diapers on the floor (and they aren't all diapers ei? ther; many are pieces of wom-out undergarments salvaged from the rag-bag). My crooked old wash tub standing on two chairs, facing each other, seats touching. The family chamber pot in the centre of the room ready for the diapers after their first rough wash. I put the washboard in the tub, then half fill a smaller tub with cold water, carry it over to the stove and pour in boiling water from the kettle. I balance it carefully on the edge of die stove and test the water with the other hand. It is just hot enough. Then I put it down beside the chamber pot and I kneel down. The little ones are playing quietiy now in the oth? er room, thank God! I wonder if Laughie and the Beatons will stay the night? It will depend on how early they get back. If they stay, there will be four for cards and I won't have to play. I don't care much for playing cards, I'd rather watch, and when the time comes for tea I won't have to jump up between deal? ings to get things ready, or to keep the fire going. It's nice hav? ing company though. I get tired listening to the radio every night...the batteries are nearly gone, too...I'll have to order new ones on the budget plan...the bill at the store is too high to add any luxuries...if the weather doesn't break soon so that Jim can get into the woods for pit timber the store might stop our cred? it...but if the weather changes we'll be all right. God is good! How pretty Anne looked in her pink blouse...I was right...the colour brought out the pink in her complexion. "Pink wouldn't look right with her red hair," Clemmie said. But what does she know? Anne has the roundest, the bluest eyes I've ever seen...they dance with mischief and make you want to be a part of her fun • her laughter...Anne loves everything and every- one..and Sonny is so smart! Talking already...walking and mn? ning everywhere...no single steps for him...no single words ei? ther...from the very first it had been sentences...he is wise beyond his years, and it shows in his grey eyes...his litde face must be startling to strangers...Sonny is so different from other children. I get up and stretch, to relieve the strain from crouching on the floor for so long. I'U have to dry some of the diapers on the line over the stove. I pick up the Uttle tub of brown smelly water and carry it over to the door. I don't bother to put on my coat. It will only take a few seconds to throw the water out into the snow. That done, I pick up the big kettle of boiling water and stagger over to the tub. I pour the water, slowly at first, so as not to splatter and scald myself. I don't really mind washing, it gives me a kind of buoyance. I can feel the rhythm of the mbbing on the washboard...and my hands



bobbing in and out of the water • it feels like part of a dance. The slapping together of the wet clothes, the swirling movement of the water, and the splatter of large drops when I lift a garment to cool, sounds like rain on a stagnant pool. I wish my back wouldn't ache so, and why should streaks of pain dart into my shoulders? No suds! And after using a whole bar of soap! The water is silent and dead; even with a tub of hot water I can't get a single bubble, the water is so hard. I watch the last drop fall from the diaper; I twist it and stack it on the chair like cord wood. I swish my hand round in the water. There is nothing left to wash; my hand catches the side of the tub. That place is dangerous. Tubs don't last long around here. There are too many uses for them • Saturday nights baths, the washing and butchering (Jim had used this one to catch the entrails of a steer he butchered for Christmas), that is when it got bent. It will have to last until spring. I don't know when the silence started. All at once everything is stifled, smothered, as if there had been a fall of goosefeathers so thick that I can't breathe. Silence in a house with children? That means mischief. I had learnt that long ago. I kick off my slippers and tip-toe to the door and peer in. There they are, the two of them, sitting on the floor close to the back wall; sitting in a circle of pieces of wall paper. Anne's little hand grasping a frayed end still clinging to the wall and gently ripping it off the plaster board. I wanted to burst out laughing. Spanking them is hard but I have to do it or we won't have any paper left on the walls. I didn't really hurt them and they soon forget all about it and went on playing with their toys. It had been fun to wash at home in Montana where clothes came out of the water gleaming white, but how can I get clothes white when the water is brackish and there isn't enough of it? Jim warned me to go easy because the water hole is going We want you to go away.

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