

- CLEAN AS A WHISTLE -



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Tana Reiff



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# 1

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## Loves to Clean

“My kitchen floor looks great,” Maggie said. She was sitting in the living room, watching TV and talking on the phone with her friend Liz. “I’m really happy with that new floor cleaner you told me about,” Maggie went on. “The kids make such a mess. And the dog! Forget it! Of course, Roger is just as bad. He’s always tracking in dirt.”

“Don’t be so hard on Roger,” Liz said with a giggle. “He’s a good guy. He always comes through for you. Like my boyfriend Kip. He sure surprises me sometimes.”

Just then, the back door slammed.

“Nick must be home,” Maggie told Liz. “I’m sure that boy will be looking for something to eat. Talk to you soon, Liz.”

Nick, her 13-year-old son, walked into the living room.

“I’m hungry,” said Nick. “Is there anything to eat around here?”

“You know better than to ask that question,” Maggie said. “Go look in the kitchen. There’s plenty to choose from. Where were you?”

“Over at Liam’s house,” said the boy.

“Oh, yes, the new boy. Is their house nice?” Maggie asked. She walked into the kitchen with him.

“Mom, is that all you think about? What someone’s house looks like?” Nick asked. “Yes, it’s a nice place—really bright and shiny.”

“I made some oatmeal cookies this morning,” Maggie said, changing the subject. “Want some?”

“Of course!” said Nick.

“See, I think about things besides nice, clean houses,” Maggie said. “I think about food for my family.”

Nick grabbed some cookies and sat down at the kitchen table. “How about a glass of milk?” he asked his mom.

“When are you going to learn to say ‘please’?” Maggie asked.

“*Please*,” Nick said, with his mouth full. “Hey, Mom, you keep talking about getting a job. Why don’t you get a job cleaning houses? You love to clean.”

Maggie spotted a tiny spot of dirt on the stove. She grabbed a rag to wipe it off. “What did you say?” she asked Nick.

“I said, why don’t you get a job cleaning houses? Liam said his family pays someone to clean theirs.”

“That’s what I thought you said. I guess that might not be a bad idea. I don’t know. I’m so busy just keeping my *own* house clean.”

“This house is clean as a whistle,” Nick said. “Why, this floor is clean enough to eat off of.”

He dropped a cookie on the floor. Then he got down on his hands and knees and ate it.

“What are you *doing*?” Maggie yelled. “I just washed that floor!” She grabbed the rag to clean up the cookie crumbs. But before she could do that, the dog came in and licked the spot.

Nick started laughing. “Oh, Mom!” he said. Then he picked up his phone and started walking toward the living room.

“Don’t you dare take cookies with you,” said Maggie. “I don’t want any crumbs in the rest of the house. I worked all day getting this place clean.”

Nick shook his head as he walked away from his mother’s voice. She was a great mom. He loved her more than anything. But sometimes he thought she was a bit too much.

In a minute, he was back in the kitchen. “Hey, Mom, I checked out a local jobs site for you. Look at this job,” he said, pointing to his phone.

Maggie moved closer to see it. The listing said, “Do you love to clean? We have a job for you!” There was a number to call.

“Yes,” Maggie said. “I love to clean. Call me nuts, but I do.”

Then she looked up at the clock on the wall. “Oh, no, it’s almost 5:00,” she said. “I have to pick up your brother at Scouts. Please walk the dog while I get Noah. And can you write down that number for me?”

She grabbed her coat and was off like the wind.

Late that night, the housecleaning job popped into Maggie’s head. She liked the sound of it.

The next morning, she called the number. By the end of the day, Maggie was an employee of the House So Clean Cleaning Service.