

Cleaning Story

Houston Hodges, for Writer's Corner, WLRH Radio Huntsville, AL USA

I have found a way to make one's spouse grateful to see you come home from a trip with dirty clothes... and that is to see that she is on crutches when you come in the door.

I had about twelve minutes to unwind, and then got to explore the new frontiers of housepersonhooding. I got to transform a load of clothes from "soiled" to "clean," in the washer – and got to find that we treat "darks" different from "whites!" (I had suspected that already from other fields of endeavor.) The twin machines in the laundry room are so challenging, and so advanced in technological complexity that it is only fitting that they should be seen as the domain of guys.

Then I got acquainted with another machine, which I had previously thought only existed to interrupt my ballgames; I found to my surprise that it can also be used to roll over the carpet and massage the fibers thereof with a rotating brush, while sucking up a lot of debris. (It's probably called a "rug-sucker," and can be shoved over the whole house, except for the corners of the rooms, and it would take a whole lot more time; it takes quite a bit as it is.

Then I got to examine the floor of the kitchen, on my hands and knees, with some stuff that smells like pine trees – while it dissolved some black marks on the vinyl. Moreover, I discovered that the black marks were left when my walking shoes are rubbed a certain way on the vinyl.

After that I got to rub the whole floor with a wet sponge on a stick; I think that is called a "mope," which is entirely appropriate.

Now all this energy was calculated to be satisfying and rewarding, and to fulfill my sense of dignity about humble tasks performed on behalf of someone you love... and to leave me smiling quietly with satisfaction. What it actually made me feel was... used. Tired. Yes, maybe even overlooked, and ignored, and underappreciated... and like all this was going to have to be done over again in a few days, and I didn't anyone walking on that kitchen floor, and I didn't want them walking on that carpet, and to not spill anything while they walked.

But I probably wouldn't feel like that if I did those jobs all the time, because I'd understand what a privilege it is to do them, and how challenging and dignified they are, and what they contribute to the betterment of the galaxy... and all.