

Laundry Basket Case

By Marilyn Reeves

In the two-story building where I live there is a very small “library” downstairs in the laundry room – basically a small bookcase filled with donated books, although recently someone took away all the paperbacks and left us with only a few hard-covers, including a small collection of Readers Digest Condensed Books.

A couple of weeks ago I was desperate for something to read but didn’t want to make a trip to the main library, so I went down and grabbed one. I read a couple of stories out of it and then set in my closet next to the laundry basket to take back downstairs the next time I went down to do my laundry. The following Saturday I set the book on top of my dirty clothes, took the basket downstairs, threw the clothes into the washer, put in the detergent and fabric softener, started the washer, came back upstairs and set my timer for 40 minutes. When the timer went off, I went back down, and took the clothes out of the washer, along with the well-washed Readers Digest Condensed Book! Stifling a scream of horror, I tossed the mangled cover and the waterlogged contents into the metal trash can and slammed down the lid. Then, using a sock, proceeded to try to sweep all the remaining little shards of paper – with their tell-tale bits of print – out of the washer and into my basket, killing my back in the process.

In walks one of my elderly neighbors, who catches me bent over attempting to clean up my disaster. “Oh my!” she says, “I see you’re wiping out the washer. Well, you must be a very clean person.”

Somehow I managed to close the washer door without her peering inside, and said something like, “I’ve got this, but thank you!”... and patiently waited until she walked back out of the laundry room before completing my task. Then, removing that pathetically wilted but very clean leatherette cover and the still bound but drowned inside pages from the trash can, I grabbed my basket containing all the criminal evidence and beat it back upstairs so I could dump the whole mushy mess into a plastic trash bag with no one – including the aforementioned observant neighbor – being the wiser. I hope.

For the past couple of weeks I have had nightmares about being arrested by the book police and brought before the court to confess my crime. The verdict is always a choice between being hanged at dawn or burned at the stake, the flames fueled by a bonfire made up of hundreds of Readers Digest Condensed Books.

I plead senility.