



# Life laundry

*How is it, Rosie Green asks herself, that she's ended up responsible for a grown man's clean pants? As Alpha Male rages over missing undies, she sets new rules for the household washing*

SOMETIME IN THE LAST DECADE, WITHOUT SIGNING anything, or even coming to a verbal agreement, and certainly with no reward, fiscal or otherwise, laundry has fallen into my remit. Which is ironic as, out of the four members of our household, I produce the least. By a mile. Pants, yes. Some running kit (rarely). Knits (blue moon). But my Zadig & Voltaire sequin tops and Myla lacy underwireds? They remain largely unacquainted with the Bosch for fear they wouldn't take kindly to slumming it with the masses on the mixed load.

The others create mountains of the stuff. Gym gear, school uniforms and endless shirts – all properly sullied and sometimes (in the case of Alpha Male's running garb) festering and damp.

The injustice of this has been building slowly, stealthily rising as I tackle another tedious tangle of socks or rub Vanish into a persistent ketchup splodge. It has never been verbalised – until pants-gate. The moment last week when AM called downstairs, sounding peeved. 'Green!' he bellowed. 'I can't find any clean pants?' and then, when said undercrackers were declared unavailable, he shouted, yes *shouted*, 'What the hell is going on?' as if I had committed some kind of dereliction of duty. Cue an eruption akin to Krakatoa.

Harsh words flew forth (from me) about division of responsibilities and pulling together as a team. I was stopped, however, mid-rant, when I realised AM was eyeing me somewhat sheepishly. Not through contrition it turned out, but because he was still sans pants.

Strange we should be fighting over it, when laundry was what first cemented our romance. I think a large part of AM's keenness to cohabit was down to fabric conditioner. He fancied a bit of huggable softness in his life. He said my towels were always fluffy and smelt of meadows (memo to those on match. com, remove that pic of you in a bikini and wrap up in a towelling robe).

We muddled along quite nicely for our twenties. We shared the task,

truly grateful to have left laundrettes behind. We only ever washed on two settings – cottons at 60°C and mixed loads at 40°C. We were also united in our fear of that dank, student smell that occurs if you don't get your clothes out of the machine within a four-hour window.

But as life cranked up a gear, cracks began to appear. AM was scathing about my airer-hanging technique. He once accused me of sock negligence; tentatively suggesting I safety-pin pairs together pre-wash as so many went AWOL.

From my point of view, I feel he is lackadaisical about colour sorting. I believe there are whites, coloureds and lights. He disputes the existence of that final category. He forgets that cashmere cannot be washed on either of the two settings above (my favourite jumper emerged Suri-sized). He folds things away when the waistbands are still damp. And hangs nice things on wire coat hangers. And despite a

not inconsiderable time in higher education, he fails to grasp that his steaming gym kit and soggy towel will, by GCSE-level osmosis, sully my James Perse tees.

But these woes aside, we both recognise the joy that is crisp, freshly laundered clothes. And we both know civilisation is on the brink of collapse when you have to dig an item out of the laundry bin, do the sniff test and then spray it with perfume/aftershave (although I've found that any feelings of shame disappear with the first drink). So, we have agreed a way forward. I will take note of his hanging protocol. He will take the initiative more. We will buy separate laundry bins and vat loads of Lenor. And henceforth any 'discussions' we have will be conducted with him pantless. There is nothing quite like a man naked from the waist down to

put you off an argument. ■

*'Part of AM's keenness to cohabit was down to fabric conditioner'*

