

# The Use-It-Again Girl

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Kathryn Franchino was a use-it-again girl. Everyone called her that—her mother, her father, her grandmother, her best friend. Even her little brother Jordan probably would have, except he was only two and couldn't really talk yet.

It all started when Kathryn's favorite sheets wore out. Kathryn was stretching in bed the way she always did first thing in the morning. Stretch—went her arms up over her head. Stretch—went her legs down under the covers. And r-r-r-i-i-i-p-p went her favorite flannel sheets as her heels dug into the worn spots.

"Mom!" Kathryn wailed, bouncing out of bed. "My sheet ripped!"

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Her mother came in to look. "So it did," she said. "Look—even the top sheet is all frayed and worn through. I'm not surprised—you've had these sheets since you were three. I guess it's time to toss them and buy new ones." She gathered the sheets off Kathryn's bed and headed out the door.

"Wait a minute!" Kathryn scrambled after her mom. "I love these sheets! Don't throw them away! Can't you sew them back together?"


Kathryn's mom held up the sheets. "See how worn they are, all the way down the middle? There's nothing left to sew, except around the edges."

"Well, then," said Kathryn. "Let's save the edges."

Her mom smiled. "What exactly do you want to save the edges for?"

Kathryn hesitated. "I could use some pieces for when you make me dust my room," she said. Dustcloths weren't very exciting, though, so she thought some more. "And I could put some in Miss Kitty's basket. I could even make sheets for Polly's bed," she said, pointing to the baby doll who had her own little bed next to Kathryn's big bed.





"You could help me make a little pillow for Polly, too," Kathryn added. "And maybe a bigger pillow for my own bed!" she finished triumphantly.

Her mom laughed. "Those are good ideas," she admitted. She held out the sheet to Kathryn. "Here—you might as well go ahead and finish tearing this in half."

Kathryn took the sheet. Cautiously, she tore a little bit.

"Go ahead," her mom urged. "Tear it all the way through."

Kathryn wasn't sure about this. Usually her mom didn't like her to tear things up. She tore a little more, then stopped again.

"Go on," her mom laughed. "Let 'er rip!"

Kathryn took a big breath, gathered the sheet in both hands, and pulled. R-r-r-i-i-i-p-p! She tore all the way from one end of the sheet to the other. It made a very satisfying sound.

"This is fun!" Kathryn said.  
"What next?"

Her mom showed her how to keep tearing until she had a pile of soft dustcloth-sized pieces. She tore bigger pieces for Miss Kitty's basket and for Polly's sheets, which her mom hemmed on the sewing machine. Together, they cut and sewed a tiny pillow for Polly and a bigger one for Kathryn. When they were done, Kathryn looked around her room happily.

"This was a good idea," she told her mom. "I didn't have to throw away my favorite sheets, and I have all these brand-new things in my room, without having to go to a single store."



Kathryn's next project was an oatmeal box. She was just in time to stop her father from tossing the empty box into the trash after Saturday morning breakfast. "Wait!" Kathryn told her dad. "Don't throw that away! I can cover it with construction paper and glitter and keep my beads in it." And that's exactly what she did.





Then there were the magazines. Kathryn's family recycled all their old magazines, but it still seemed like a waste of good pictures to Kathryn. So one rainy Sunday afternoon, she sat down with a big pile of magazines and her best scissors. She cut out one pile of people pictures, one pile of animal pictures, and one pile of car and truck pictures.

Then Kathryn helped Jordan glue the pictures on some old computer paper and put them in a scrapbook. "See, Jordan," she said, pointing. "Here's a red car. Can you say red car?"

Pointing and crowing over the pictures kept Jordan busy for over half an hour. "That's a long time for a two-year-old!" said Kathryn's dad.

There was no stopping Kathryn now. She stuffed old socks with catnip to make toys for Miss Kitty. She cut a slit in the plastic lid of an empty coffee can and made a piggy bank for herself. She helped Jordan plaster stickers all over the box her new tennis shoes came in, and gave it to him to store his blocks. Every place she looked, she found something she could use again!



"Mom, you need to teach me how to make a quilt," Kathryn announced one day. She finished the orange she was eating and dumped the peels into the compost bucket under the sink. Kathryn liked thinking that even her orange peels could be used again, to help make their garden grow better next summer.

"Make a quilt!" her mother exclaimed. "Whatever made you think of that?"

"Everyone makes quilts in books about the olden times," Kathryn explained. "And the kids never have to throw away their favorite clothes, because their moms cut them into pieces and make them into quilts. I hate it when you give away my old clothes. So we should make them into a quilt."

Her mother looked at Kathryn and shook her head, smiling. "You really are a use-it-again girl, aren't you," she said. "The only problem is, I'm not like the moms in olden times. I've never made a quilt in my life. I wouldn't have a clue where to begin!"

Kathryn took another orange and began peeling it. "Well," she said calmly. "I guess it's time we both learned, isn't it?" And that's exactly what they did.



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