



Karen Anderson

I finally got a new clothes washer, which, of course, irritated the other appliances

Club Columnist Karen Anderson has owned an older home long enough to know that appliances can sometimes team-up, just to make life difficult for the homeowner.

This column begins with a nice, hot cup of tea, with sugar. Cream would be nice, but I'll skip it because I'm having a difficult time opening my refrigerator.

It all started when the washing machine went kaput last month. By the time we got the new one delivered and installed, a mountain of laundry had accumulated. I spent most of an evening washing, drying, and ironing. By midnight, just one load – a pile of towels – remained to do.

"Tomorrow," I promised myself, and left the towels in a heap on the laundry room floor.

I returned to the basement bright and early the next morning only to find the towels sitting soaked, in the middle of a big puddle.

After a little deductive work on my hands and knees, I found the water was flowing from the bottom of our ancient hot water heater. Two broken appliances in a row!

The plumber sent by the Home Owners Club located a replacement hot water the following day, installed it, and I finally got the sodden towels washed and dried.

"Sure glad that's over," the Scholarly Gentleman said later.

"If only," I replied, adding: "Appliances failures always happen in threes."

I spun around and shot a dark glance at the old dryer. It seemed to huddle closer to its new washing companion.

"Just don't try anything," I snarled at it as I left the basement and plodded up the stairs.

There I found the Scholarly Gentleman, still holding the laundry, staring across the kitchen. I followed his gaze and froze.

"The refrigerator," we whispered in unison, with looks of fright on our faces.

Our refrigerator dates back to the Epic Kitchen Remodel of 2001. And it was starting to have little ... problems.

While the Scholarly Gentleman put away the towels, I

tiptoed off to my computer and started checking the websites of appliance dealers. This was my chance to get a side-by-side fridge ... or to switch to a bottom-freezer model, the kind my mother ridicules (she recently moved to Florida, so there's nothing holding me back now).

However, my dreams of installing a trendy new refrigerator shattered as soon as I saw the list of specifications. At some point in the past 15 years, the appliance industry decided that all refrigerators must be either one inch taller than my current model, one inch wider, or both.

That means a new one won't fit in the old space – unless we take a Sawzall to our lovely birch cabinetwork. Incredulous, I roused the Scholarly Gentleman from his study and, armed with tape measures and yardsticks, we measured and re-measured.

"I can't believe this," I fumed, retracting the metal tape measure with an angry snap. The refrigerator's compressor replied with a menacing growl.

"Perhaps we could lower the kitchen floor?" suggested the Scholarly Gentleman, ever the peacemaker. I grabbed pencil and paper and began to calculate the depth of one layer of Marmoleum, plus multiple layers of beat-up vinyl, before realizing he was joking.

"This is not funny," I yowled. "I am not going to remodel a perfectly wonderful kitchen just because the stupid refrigerator is giving up the ghost!"

A hailstorm of ice cubes exploded from the icemaker.

"Whoa," said the Scholarly Gentleman. "Maybe we should talk

about this in the living room."

From a safe distance, we drew up a plan for placing the refrigerator on the appliance equivalent of life support. There would be no more leaning on the door while perusing the contents. We would learn to put up with food freezing at the back of the shelves ("iceberg lettuce" has become a literal term at our house). And, we would never again discuss replacing the refrigerator while in the kitchen.

"Feeling better?" the Scholarly Gentleman asked. I nodded.

"We have lots of smaller, less-expensive appliances," I said hopefully. "If we're lucky, maybe the toaster will explode."

