



The Laundromat at Two in the Morning

I still cannot explain what made me walk there that night. This was not intentional. I was just wandering, letting my feet choose the direction, and then the laundromat appeared. It was the only thing glowing on the entire street, humming to itself like it had something to tell me. Through the glass, the machines thrummed and whirred, with a low sound that felt surprisingly inviting. Maybe I just needed a place where the air was moving, where the silence was not so heavy like it is in my apartment at two in the morning.

Inside, the smell was the first thing I noticed. It was that strong detergent scent, sharp enough to sting a little, with something older hiding under it, warm metal, coins, machines running far too long. The lights hummed overhead, that dull electric buzz you stop hearing until you are tired enough for it to get under your skin.

The washers were tumbling slowly, clothes spinning as if there was no rush. The dryers rattled and groaned every few minutes, like they were complaining a little. There were only three other patrons. A man sat at one end, with a newspaper so close to his face it almost looked like he wanted to delve into it. A woman folded her clothes in what appeared to be a ritual, with all the shirts lined with precision. And a kid slept across two chairs, mouth open, and one arm dangling off the side, out cold.

I sat down on a chair that rocked slightly, the bolt underneath loose. I started watching the washers. The clothes tumbled, colors blurring together. There is something hypnotic about it, like staring into water or fire. You think about everything and nothing at the same time. My brain



wandered. I thought about how people say laundromats are boring, but they are not. They are little waiting rooms of life. Everyone who walks in is carrying pieces of their home in bags, sheets that smell like their kids, shirts that still hold the shape of their day. And for an hour, those pieces spin together, stripped of who they belong to.

I wondered how many stories had passed through this place. Arguments probably, whispered phone calls, someone crying quietly over a dryer while pretending to check their phone. Maybe someone once fell in love here, over the exchange of a borrowed quarter. It sounds ridiculous, but late at night everything feels possible.

The woman folding clothes finished first. She stacked her shirts so perfectly that it almost hurt to watch, like the world should not be allowed to ruin that neatness. The man with the newspaper left without looking at anyone. The kid kept sleeping. I stayed. I observed my clothes turning, and turning, like they would never stop. The machines hummed, the lights buzzed, and the whole world seemed to slow down to meet the rhythm of the spin.

When my dryer ended, the space went remarkably quiet, as if it were holding its breath. I gathered my clothes, wrinkled because I am a dreadful folder, and walked back out into the street. The night remained stale and empty. The light from the laundromat cast a glow behind me, and I considered the truth that some places only reveal their real selves when no one is paying attention. Perhaps it was true for people as well.