

# **Late Night Laundry**

## **By**

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I was mesmerized by troubled amber eyes as she entered my soul with each step. Tori sauntered over to my washer, hips knocking down the walls as she made her way. I cannot believe I messed up our relationship. My need to save everyone ruined our future together.

"Declan, you are washing late tonight," she said, leaning seductively against the gyrating washer. "That's a lot of books even for a brain like you."

The compliment caused me to remember how blissful we were four years ago before Tori walked into my apartment and found Megan in the shower.

"It was a long, disappointing day at City Hall. So, I figured I would do something productive," I replied.

"Who would have the nerve to disappoint you?" she asked while winking.

"You would be surprised."

"I'm sure there's nothing you could say that would surprise these ears."

I could beg her to be with me and let me give her and her daughter a better life. But unfortunately, she had a child with a local gangster. I did not care. I would love and care for both.

Instead, I replied. " Mayor Maxwell gave me six case studies on neighborhood safety, and he wants the first draft of a community safety initiative proposal on his desk by nine a.m."

"That's not surprising, babe, or disappointing; that's just you trying to save the neighborhood where we grew up," she said, tapping her nails on the washer like rain on an old tin roof.

*She called me babe. Does that mean she still loves me?*

"Tori, I love you. Nothing happened between Megan and me. She needed to shower because the water was off at her apartment." I blurted out.

"Your ex-girlfriend comes out of your shower in a towel, and you expect me to believe there was NOTHING going on!" she yelled.

"It's the truth. You ran out of my life four years ago and into the arms of a low-life."

"Leon helped me when I had nowhere else to turn." she sobbed as her beautiful eyes filled up to the brim. However, no tears fell.

Leon limped in, wearing a red silk shirt, and matching red slacks. I could see my reflection in his shiny red dress shoes. He glanced at me and sniffed the air as if he smelled week-old garbage. Then, he went to the vending machine, still walking as if one of his knees was out of the socket with each step. Finally, Leon got his chips and gum, shot daggers at Tori, and exited.

I turned my attention to the pretty lady, but she had moved to her corner of the laundromat. My wallet and the Starbucks cup filled with quarters were gone. Her head made a seesaw motion as she looked at me and outside, where Leon posted up against a dirty bullet-proof window. The glass was missing chunks and covered in cracks after being an innocent witness and collateral damage to late-night neighborhood activities. I moved casually over to a dryer near Tori. A little girl's pink dress fell and landed on the dirty floor that a mop had not

touched in months. We bent to pick it up, and our hands touched. I looked into seductive brown eyes, now sad and pleading. I quickly whispered to her, and we both stood up.

I continued pleading my case like the seasoned litigator I had become. I hurriedly told her I would help her even if she did not want to be with me. I told her that she and Leon's child deserved better. I explained that she did not have to steal from me; I would freely give her my all.

"Destiny is not Leon's daughter. Her birthday is in a few months. She will be three years old." she stated calmly.

Her shoulders slumped. She continued folding, and I threw my dark slacks and socks into the dryer. I hung my conservative suit jackets on hangers and continued reading the case law from when she first approached. Numbers and months consumed my mind. I was a new father in shock. I folded the same shorts ten times.

Finally, Tori finished folding the pink and purple princess dresses and matching lace socks. On the way out, she stumbled against my cart and mumbled something about being clumsy and left. She exchanged words with Leon, and they walked off in the same direction. I folded well-worn t-shirts and noticed my wallet was in the cart. The cash was gone, but my license and credit cards were intact.

I stood there rehearsing another speech to Tori and explaining about that day with Megan. Then, the street traffic brought me back to reality as Tori walked in with a little girl. They both had suitcases.

"I'm willing to accept your help for her sake. You were right, she deserves better, and she should have a relationship with her father," she said.

I nodded and silently thanked God. Then, I loaded the laundry and suitcases into my SUV. I could not stop looking at the princess with eyes like mine. I am so glad I decided to do late-night laundry.