

LAUNDRY DAY

A ten-minute parable about September 11, 2001
by Dawson Moore

PO Box 3505
Valdez AK 99686
835-5325
dawson@threewisemonkeys.org
www.dawsonmoore.com

CAST

<i>IVAN</i>	<i>Easy going. Dolly's boyfriend.</i>
<i>DOLLY</i>	<i>Tries to be positive. Summery dress.</i>
<i>PEROT</i>	<i>An effeminate problem ignorer.</i>
<i>RENEE</i>	<i>Sullen Goth-raver type. Carries a purse.</i>
<i>MRS. CRAFT</i>	<i>Warmly evil.</i>

SET

The living room of a San Francisco apartment. There is a large table with four chairs around it. A vacuum cleaner lies inconspicuously upstage.

TIME

Saturday night at 10:00 PM.

At rise, IVAN is rubbing DOLLY's shoulders.

Just relax.	<u>IVAN</u>
I'm relaxed.	<u>DOLLY</u>
No, you're not.	<u>IVAN</u>
Would you believe I'm trying?	<u>DOLLY</u>
Yeah. Yeah, I'll give you that.	<u>IVAN</u>
Are YOU relaxed?	<u>DOLLY</u>
Very.	<u>IVAN</u>

DOLLY

Ivan, this is important to you, too... right?

IVAN

Yes, yes of course it is.

DOLLY

We're the pillars of this household

IVAN

I know, you're right, relax.

DOLLY

If we don't stand up for ourselves now, it'll only get worse. You and I make everyone's laundry time run smoothly. We've got clear rules, we shouldn't have to baby-sit and nag those two. And they can't even show up on time. *(pause)* But I'm relaxed.

IVAN

That's good. Except, possibly... could you be lying?

DOLLY

(laughing) Ridiculous. I wouldn't lie to you. Relax.

IVAN

You gonna rub my shoulders?

DOLLY

I love you.

IVAN

Oh, I guess your love will do. I love you, too.

He leans over to kiss her. PEROT enters.

PEROT

Okay, I'm here, smooching can stop, the meeting can start.

DOLLY

Nice of you to show up.

IVAN

Hey, Perot.

DOLLY

(playfully) So why are you late? Huh? Huh?

PEROT

I'm less than five minutes late! Within five minutes isn't late.

DOLLY

Yes it is.

PEROT

No, it isn't. Less than five minutes late is "my watch is slow" or "bad traffic" or "I didn't want to be here and I came anyway."

IVAN

Did you pick up the quarters?

PEROT

(slight pause) Shit.

IVAN

(worried about DOLLY's reaction) You're kidding.

PEROT

I just got busy. You two aren't going to blow this out of all proportion, are you?

DOLLY

No, no, of course not. Relax.

PEROT

All right, I'm relaxed. That was easy. Your voice just coaxed the tension right out of me.

IVAN

A lot of relaxation in this room, that's what I'm feeling.

RENEE enters.

RENEE

Hello, everyone.

DOLLY

(simultaneous) Renee.

IVAN

(simultaneous) Hey, Renee.

PEROT

(simultaneous) Darling, we've been missing you.

RENEE goes and sits abruptly.

RENEE

Gang's all here. Let's talk about laundry!

They all look at each other, then take a seat.

DOLLY

Okay then. Let's begin... *(checks watch)*... at ten-oh-eight.

RENEE

Ivan, shouldn't you be taking notes?

PEROT

Oh, do, that would be very official.

IVAN

(getting up) I'll get a pad.

DOLLY

You don't have to... never mind. Go.

IVAN looks at her, then exits

PEROT

(calling after IVAN) I've got a pen!

DOLLY

How've you been, Renee?

RENEE

Fine.

DOLLY

We hardly ever see each other any more, it seems like.

RENEE

Different schedules.

DOLLY

I suppose so. How IS the rave scene?

IVAN reenters with a pad of paper. He sits and takes notes on the conversation.

IVAN

Found it.

DOLLY

Fine. Meeting beginning at ten-oh-nine.

PEROT

I call this meeting to order! Oh wait, that's what you're doing now.

DOLLY

Perot...

PEROT

Sorry, I'll be good. Laundry! Let's talk about it.

DOLLY

Look, I know this isn't that big a deal for you guys, but I wish you could accept that it is for me and Ivan. We can all only do laundry on Sundays from one-twenty to four-fifty in the morning. That's a given. That's our time with the machines. So we have to work as a team.

RENEE

Fucking ridiculous.

IVAN

Hey now—

PEROT

Renee just means the system with the neighbors, right, Renee?

RENEE

Yeah, sure.

PEROT

(to IVAN and DOLLY) The way this complex is run is freakish. Who ever heard of a laundry room that wasn't a first-come, first-serve free-for-all? I never thought I'd miss it, but this is definitely worse.

IVAN

We're not here to argue about that. Anybody gonna go explain to Missus Craft how we aren't doing that nonsense anymore?

RENEE

She's a freak.

DOLLY

Our landlady's crazy. We can't solve that. Complaining about it is a waste of time.

RENEE

Whatever.

IVAN

We put up with it for the rent. And it's worth it. You know it's worth it. Renee, you can't get a closet in downtown San Francisco for the hundred dollars you pay here.

PEROT

Hey, I pay one twenty-five!

RENEE

You've got a private bathroom.

PEROT

Yeah, but twenty-five dollars a month less!

RENEE

Shut up, Perot.

PEROT

Oh, now you're going to get bitchy with me, too.

RENEE

I bet you forgot to get quarters, didn't you?

PEROT

I thought this wasn't going to be a big deal.

DOLLY

But it is a big deal. Not because of tonight, but because it's a pattern.

PEROT

It is not a pattern.

IVAN

You never do anything, Perot. Whatever it's your turn to do, you forget. You make someone else buy the fabric softener and pay them back. You buy the roll of quarters from whoever remembered it was your turn and knew you'd forget.

In sequence, IVAN, then DOLLY, then RENEE all pull out rolls of quarters.

PEROT

Curses, foiled again. But if there's no change in my behavior, can that be a pattern? I thought patterns implied movement and variety... I'm consistent.

RENEE

And you're slow. I always have to move your stuff to the dryer.

DOLLY

Okay, wait a minute. You are too fast with that.

RENEE

I am not.

DOLLY

We have thirty-eight minutes with the washer and fifty-three with the dryer. No one is supposed to move anyone's clothes before that. Twice I've caught you moving my stuff early!

RENEE

By, like, a minute. What is wrong with you?

DOLLY

What is wrong with YOU? How can you be so insensitive! Do you know how violated it makes me feel? We all sat down together and came up with this system.

RENEE

Violated? I moved your wet LATE laundry to the dryer. Are these rules written in stone? Can we change them, or does it take an act of Congress? We should just pay one of us to deal with all the laundry so that the rest of us could get on with our lives.

IVAN

I'm not going to be your washer-woman.

DOLLY

And no one is touching my clothes but me. You shrinking my jeans is practically why we codified the rules.

RENEE

Your ass just got fatter, accept it.

IVAN

Hey, hey, hey, we're getting a little personal there.

DOLLY

(to IVAN) Don't worry, no problem. (to RENEE) I have a scale, and I did NOT put on any weight.

RENEE

(to PEROT) Would you just do my laundry so I can get off this fucking committee?

PEROT

Less than zero, that's how much I want into dirty panties, goth-girl.

RENEE

Ah, you people!

DOLLY

Okay. Everybody just calm down. Look, we all know why we're here. The rest of the tenants in this building are laughing at us about how poorly we run our shift. It doesn't have to be like that. Laundry day. The keeping of the schedule. The buying of detergent. The lint trap. There are a myriad of jobs that go into making our time run smoothly, and as a team we can make it happen!

PEROT

Uh-huh. Who exactly made you the sergeant of the laundry anyway, anyway?

DOLLY

No one else wanted the job!

PEROT

Maybe we don't really need this system of yours. Maybe the free-for-all is the way to go. Embrace the anarchy.

IVAN

You're a dick, Perot.

DOLLY

You know that doesn't work.

PEROT

Just because I was willing to be the first one waiting in the hall. Until you two started going in shifts and called THAT fair!

RENEE

(screaming) I went without clean clothes for a month!!!

They all sit back and look at her, then each other uncomfortably.

IVAN

Okay. So... we've only got about two more hours before laundry time. Let me go over the notes I've taken so far.

There is a knock at the door. They all look at each other. DOLLY answers it and is surprised to see MRS. CRAFT, who holds a thick legal document.

MRS CRAFT

Hello, Dolly.

PEROT

Hello, Missus Craft.

MRS CRAFT

Precious Perot. Ivan. Renee.

RENEE

Hello, Missus Craft.

Uncomfortable pause.

IVAN

Please... won't you come in?

She does.

MRS CRAFT

Thank you. How are you all tonight? Not fighting, I hope. I heard that you're running a pretty sloppy laundry shift, and I know what a strain that can place on roommates.

DOLLY

You've heard?

MRS CRAFT

That's the rumor around the building.

IVAN

(to DOLLY) All right, who's been talking to the neighbors about our dirty laundry?

MRS CRAFT

But don't worry. You won't have to be worrying about the early Sunday morning schedule any more.

RENEE

We're getting a better time slot? Did someone die?

MRS CRAFT

No, the whole schedule is going away.

DOLLY

What?

MRS CRAFT

Yes, no more laundry room shifts.

RENEE

Wow.

IVAN

That is great, Missus Craft. It's really nice of you to come round and tell us that in person. *(looking at the roomies)* That's going to be a great load off of this household, huh?

They all laugh.

DOLLY

Yeah. Renee, can I say I'm sorry? I was being irrational.

RENEE

Yeah, you can say it. *(pause)* Me, too.

MRS CRAFT

Telling you that's not why I came over, actually. I'm handing out evictions.

Stunned silence. Missus Craft watches them, enjoying their confusion.

IVAN

But... you can't... you can't just evict us. You have to have some grounds.

MRS CRAFT

Violation of your lease. It clearly states there are to be no vacuum cleaners in your apartment... *(shows them the clause in the contract)*... and that clearly IS a vacuum cleaner... *(points to the table)*... clearly you're in the wrong here, and if you turn to page 98... *(she does and points to a section)*... you'll see that I'm allowed to literally kick you out into the street and throw your possessions after you if you're not gone in a week.

IVAN

You can't do that to us.

MRS CRAFT

Oh, didn't we think we were invincible?

RENEE

But where are we supposed to go. I don't have the money to move. Give us a month.

MRS CRAFT

No.

IVAN

That can't be legal.

MRS CRAFT

Oh, it is. Trust me. People always complain, and I've had lawyers look into it. I'm well within my rights, considering that it's such a flagrant disregard for lease conditions.

DOLLY

But I thought... I thought we were friends.

MRS CRAFT

Don't look at me, I would have read my contract first if I were you.

PEROT quietly starts crying, while the rest of the roommates start addressing MRS. CRAFT at once.

RENEE

(simultaneous) This is crazy. Crazy. How can you do this to us? You're out of your mind. You're nuts. You can't just throw us all out on the street!

DOLLY

(simultaneous) You came in and said hello to us. You asked us how our day went. What's wrong with you? You're a sadist.

IVAN

(simultaneous) I'm so angry, I don't know what to do. I want to hit you. I want to make you feel pain. I want you out in the street with me throwing things at you.

MRS CRAFT

Shhhh. Shhhh. Shhhh. *(pause)* Shhhh. No, one way or the other, I will be having all of you leave, whether you like it or not. I'm sorry, Renee, Perot, Dolly, Ivan. You're innocent victims, and that's the way it has to be. I'm actually going to have the building demolished.

And... okay, this part is a secret, so you can't tell anyone. I got this phone call from someone with the housing department, and he says they want to build a new kind a building here. The ceilings are going to be only five feet high. I know, I know, I asked the same question: won't all that stooping be bad for everybody's back? But apparently something called the department of genetic control is breeding people who will only be four feet in height... they can fit twice as many in the same building site! Isn't that ingenious?

Now they're not sure exactly how these people will fare in the world when there're still a lot of us tallies *(pronounced like "talkies")* around. You all will be close to the last of our kind by the time you die. Could be tough on the little people till then. And there are genetic breeding variables, or something like that, which means that the first batch or two might come out a little "slow." Which is terrible for me, of course, because slow people have a hard time keeping jobs and paying their rent. But

MRS. CRAFT cont.

because this is so important, they've got a huge chunk of government cash to pay for their care.

I'm essentially going to be a keeper for a bunch of mental and genetic midgets. It's funny how your life can be changed with one phone call. One event. You'll need to be getting out by Friday.

MRS CRAFT leaves. Everyone is stunned. IVAN stares at the door Missus Craft left by. DOLLY is on the verge of tears. RENEE stands and hugs PEROT. They go over and include DOLLY in the hug. They look at IVAN and beckon him in. He crosses to them. The lights fade on the group. End of play.