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ECW1225-O

12/13/2025

Title: Washland

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Kim hadn't realized how serious moving out was until she stood in her own apartment, with fresh paint, the tall windows, the pale wooden floors, and the scent of freshness that lingered through the rooms she had specifically chosen every design for how she felt in every room, and she loved it. Her only hiccup was that she had no washer or dryer; the company wouldn't be able to deliver it for another two weeks. Kim was in a bit of a dilemma. She searched for nearby laundromats because she had two loads she couldn't wash because of her urgent move.

"Washland?" she mumbled to herself as she scrolled.

She hesitated and even considered just waiting the two weeks out, but she just couldn't let her clothes pile up much longer. So, she went and looked at a few places and stumbled across Washland and decided to try them out. Given their unique aesthetic and cleanliness reviews, she was satisfied. She walked in and was immediately impressed by their dark, perfectly designed walls & floors, their décor, and their all-around creative thinking.

"Hi, can I have some help please?" Kim asked the attendant in the window

"Of course, how can I help you?" The employee said with a smile

She explained to the employee what she needed assistance with, purchasing a laundry card, how to work certain things, etc. They talked about Kim's move to the city, and how she moved to this new city so soon for this new job opportunity. They chatted a bit longer before the attendant showed her how everything worked. Kim loaded her clothes up and proceeded to start washing.

About an hour and a half later, after everything was fully done, she began to fold her things on the laundromat table and put them away. She began to space out as she was in her groove and happy that everything turned out okay for her first time.

“Excuse me.”

Kim looked up to see a woman standing stiffly beside her table, arms crossed. Her lipstick was perfect, but her tone was not. Kim turns to the woman.

“That’s my top,” the woman said.

Kim froze. “Excuse me?”

“My hot pink top and those look like my black leggings, too. They were right here.”

Kim looked down at the clothes in her hands, her black leggings, her faded underclothes, and the hot pink top she’d owned since high school. “I think there’s been a mistake. These are mine.”

The woman’s voice rose. “I left my stuff in that same dryer. You took my stuff!”

People started glancing over. The machines grew silent, like they were listening in too. Kim’s chest tightened. She suddenly felt like she had to regain control over this situation.

“These are my clothes!” Kim said as her voice became sterner. “This has to be a mistake.”

Before Kim could respond, the attendant stepped out from behind the counter, different from the attendant Kim spoke with earlier. The attendant got in between the ladies; she was older, looked drained, and you could tell she did not feel like dealing with either the situation, she wore a Washland apron dusted with lint and pockets filled with extra change in case that was the problem.

“What’s going on?” she asked calmly.

“She took my clothes,” the woman said.

The attendant looked at Kim, then at the dryer number. “Which one was your dryer?”

“Dryer 3,” the woman said confidently.

The attendant walked down the row, opened dryer 3, and reached inside. Empty. She looked at the ladies, then moved one dryer over and opened dryer 2. A hot pink top and black leggings fell out.

“Oh,” the woman said, confused.

The room of people sigh.

“I must’ve mixed them up,” she stuttered, avoiding eye contact with Kim.

Kim nodded, understanding how she could’ve got them mixed up, but also still upset that all this had happened. The woman gathered her clothes and left, looking down, not saying another word.

As Kim finished putting her clothes away, her hands were still shaking. The laundromat went back to normal quickly, machines spinning, people waiting, life moving forward. Washland still smelled like detergent and heat, but it felt different now. Like a place she’d survived.

Kim took her clean clothes home, realizing that moving out meant more than independence. Sometimes it meant standing your ground even in a laundromat.