

Laundry Day

A Ten-Minute Play
by Dan West

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SAM - Male - 20s - The Ocelot, a street-level superhero

CHASE - Male - Late 20s to 30s - Astroman, a cosmic-level superhero. Handsome.

Setting: The living room of the two-bedroom apartment shared by Sam & Chase. Exits to Bedrooms, Kitchen, and Laundry Room.

(At Rise: It is Saturday morning. SAM sits on the couch, removing clothes from a laundry basket, folding them, and packing them into a duffel bag which sits on the coffee table before him. He is bare-chested, wearing just a pair of sweatpants, and is battered and bruised, both hands wrapped in bandages.

As he packs, Sam comes across a domino mask. He looks at it for a moment, undecided what to do with it. He holds it up to his face the wrong way as if staring into its eyes and then places it down on the coffee table next to the duffle bag. He looks at it a moment longer and then goes back to folding. Every movement seems to pain him,

After a moment, the front door opens and CHASE enters. He is dressed business casual and carries a travel bag. He is classically good looking.)

CHASE

Hey, Sam. I'm home.

(Noticing Sam's condition and putting down the travel bag)

You okay?

(after Sam doesn't answer)

Rough night last night?

(after Sam doesn't answer - indicating the duffel bag)

Going somewhere?

SAM

Who knows...

(Beat)

I...I was thinking about it.

CHASE

What? Why?

(after Sam doesn't answer)

You look kinda ragged. How about I grab you an energy drink from the fridge, then we can talk?

(Sam doesn't respond as Chase exits to the kitchen. Sam notices the domino mask on the coffee table in front of him. He quickly grabs it and shoves it into the bottom of the duffel bag..)

CHASE (O.S.)

Did Nebby behave herself while I was away?

SAM

Always. She's a darling.

(Chase reenters from the kitchen and hands Sam the drink. He has a can of wet cat food in his other hand. He looks at Sam closely)

CHASE

Jesus, Sam. When was the last time you slept?

SAM

I sleep.

CHASE

No, I mean real sleep. Not passing out on the couch at 4 am.

SAM

I'm fine.

CHASE

If you say so.

(beat - indicating catfood)

Do you mind if I...

SAM

(Glad to be out of the current line of discussion)

I'm sure she's on your bed like always.

CHASE

Thanks. I'll just be a second.

(bounding into his bedroom)

Nebula! Daddy's home.

(Sam takes a slug from the energy drink. He rises from the couch and cringes.)

CHASE (O.S.)

Who's my good little kitty? Who's my purr girl

(Sam takes a peek under the bandage wrapped around his midsection and grimaces.)

CHASE (O.S.)

Did you miss me when I was away? Did you? Yes, you did. Daddy's sorry he's been away so much lately. There's just been so much business that needs my attention lately.

(Sam paces back and forth anxiously, clearly in pain. Chase re-enters carrying a mostly empty laundry basket of his own.)

CHASE

She seems happy. Thanks for looking after her.

SAM

Look, Chase, it's nothing personal. You're a great guy--.

CHASE

Sam, you're not moving out

SAM

You're never around here anyway. Why do you even need a roommate?

CHASE

Seriously?

SAM

It's not like you can't afford the rent. You can always hire a cat sitter.

CHASE

Wow. You really are serious. Let me just get my laundry on and maybe we can run out and get a pizza or something..

(Chase grabs his travel bag, dumps it into his laundry basket, and heads into the laundry room. Sam sits back down on the couch and then suddenly realizes something. He struggles to his feet and takes a step towards the laundry room.)

CHASE (O.S.)

Hey! Saturday is my laundry day!

(Sam freezes in his tracks as Chase emerges holding what looks like a damp leopard print body suit.)

CHASE

What's this?

SAM

I...uh...

CHASE

(examining the suit)

Is this...who makes a body suit in leopard print?

(beat - still casual)

Is this some kind of costume?

SAM

I do cosplay...sometimes It's a thing...

CHASE

Cosplay.

SAM

You know...conventions and such.

CHASE

(feeling the fabric)

Sam? Is this a kevlar weave?

SAM

It's...high quality cosplay?

CHASE

And these claw marks feel pretty damn real.

(He tosses the suit to Sam. Sam catches the suit but doesn't even look at it)

CHASE

(beat - then connecting the dots)

The late nights. The bruises. Your sudden disappearances whenever crisis calls...

SAM

I work nights. You know that.

CHASE

(slowly)

Sam? Are you The Ocelot?

SAM

(too quickly)

No.

(beat - Chase just stares at him)

I'm not.

CHASE

(beat)

You can tell me.

(beat)

Sam-

SAM

(exploding)

Okay! Fine! I'm The Ocelot. Happy now?

CHASE

Holy shit!

SAM
(bitterly)

Yeah. Holy shit. Your loser roommate is some second rate costumed crimefighter.

CHASE

That's not– I mean, this is incredible. Do you know Tae Kwan Do?

SAM

It doesn't matter.

CHASE

Yeah it does. This is hella cool.

SAM

(balling up the Ocelot suit and hurling it across the room)

Well, enjoy it while you can. Cuz, I'm quitting.

CHASE

Wha..? Huh...? Because I laughed?

SAM

No... Because I got my ass kicked last night.

CHASE

I'm sure it's not easy being a street vigilante...

SAM (over)

Because I get my ass kicked lots of nights. But last night was different.

CHASE

But dude, you're the Ocelot. You're a badass.

SAM

I was the Ocelot. Last night changed everything. Mech-Gorilla didn't just break my ribs. He broke my body. He broke my soul.

CHASE

Mech-Gorilla!? Isn't he a–

SAM (over - bitter)

-An Astroman villain? Yeah.

(beat)

I didn't know until I got there. But what was I supposed to do? Run away?

CHASE

Why didn't you call for back-up?

SAM

(incredulous)

Back-up? What, do you think I have some kind of light signal that I can just shine into the air?

CHASE

I guess not...

SAM

I was no match for him. He just tossed me aside like yesterday's trash, and I laid there in a heap as he took his time casually emptying the bank's vaults.

CHASE

Ouch

SAM

(beat - then slowly)

There's this kid down on the Southside - Miguel. No dad. Mom works three jobs. I rescued him and his little sister from some traffickers a few months back. He said I was his favorite superhero. He drew a picture of me, said he wanted to be just like me. I wonder what he'd think if he could see me now.

CHASE

Sam. Don't be so hard on yourself. We all have bad days at work.

SAM

Bad day at work? Chase, you sell software to corporate C-levels. A bad day for you is a dropped Teams call. I just got ragdolled by a 12-foot-tall mechanical gorilla.

(beat)

What am I supposed to do? Just pick myself up and brush myself off and get right back at 'em?

CHASE

It's what I would do.

SAM

And I'm sure you would. You're good at everything. You're smart. You're handsome. You're popular. Look at you. Always put together. Flying around, closing big tech sales with Fortune 1000 companies. Making it look so easy. You got your whole life figured out. While I'm forced to drive drunk college kids home from bars just to cover my share of the rent.

(beat)

Hell, I can't even keep my secret identity secret from you.

CHASE

I mean, you left your battlesuit in the washer on my laundry day.

SAM

Exactly. I'm supposed to be the super one - enhanced reflexes, trained by mystical jaguar warriors - and you, a regular guy, thoroughly outclass me.

(beat - disconsolate)

I can't even handle a mechanical ape.

CHASE

Mech-Gorilla is no joke, he hits like a freight train.

SAM

Don't try to make me feel better. The fact is that you are more capable than me even without powers.

(Chase turns away and faces the audience for a moment thoughtfully before turning back to Sam.)

CHASE

But what if I do have powers?

SAM

Don't. Don't give me some neo-corporate power of positive thinking pep talk crap. I'm not in the mood.

CHASE

No. I mean I literally have superpowers too.

(beat)

I'm Astroman.

SAM

If this is your idea of some joke...

CHASE

No, really.

(He rips his shirt open, revealing his Astroman uniform)

I'm Astroman.

(after Sam doesn't answer - perhaps lifting a heavy piece of furniture with one hand)

You know...Astro-

SAM

I know who Astroman is, Chase!

CHASE

(perhaps putting the furniture back down)

So see, we both have secrets!

SAM

What? Is this supposed to make me feel better?

CHASE

Well...yeah.

SAM

Well, it doesn't. Here I was thinking I was the superhero, and it turns out that the "normal guy" that I've been living with for the last two years blows me away in that regard, too. So much for my cat-like instincts.

(He flops back onto the couch.)

Maybe my uncle can find me a job at his tool and die shop when I get back to Sheboygan.

CHASE

C'mon Sam. You took on Mech-Gorilla. That takes guts.

SAM

Sure. Whatever. Don't you have a planet of rock people to save or something?

CHASE

Sam, you're not being fair...

SAM

Fair? What's fair? I spent years searching out that Jaguar Cult. Years learning their secrets. I wanted to be a hero my entire life. I trained hour after hour, day after day, for this. And your powers were just handed to you.

(beat)

I mean, why did you keep me around anyway? It's not like you need my half of the rent.

(beat - sarcastic)

Oh, I know. It's because I am so good at taking care of Nebula, isn't it?

CHASE

(beat - then quietly)

...That's part of it, yeah.

SAM

And just your luck, you got a cat man for a cat sitter!

(An uncomfortable silence as Sam glares daggers at Chase..)

CHASE

(finally - calmly)

I needed to know she was in good hands, in case one day I didn't make it back.

SAM

Sure, you did.

CHASE

(a long beat)

The truth is, I am terrified most of the time.

(beat)

Last week...last week, I was boxed in by a swarm of sentient asteroids in the Upsilon Sector. I couldn't break through, couldn't call for help. And I thought, "This is it. This is how it ends". Not on Earth. Not anywhere anyone will find me. Just...gone.

SAM

But you did make it back, didn't you?

CHASE

I did. I did make it back. Yes.

(beat)

But before I did, you know what I was thinking about? Not saving the planet. Not that, if I fail, billions of people could die, I was thinking about this apartment. About whether you'd remember to give Nebula her thyroid medication on Sunday. About who would water the half-dead ficus in my bedroom window. About never having another Saturday evening where the toughest choice is pizza or Thai food.

(beat)

I didn't ask for this, Sam. Some Space Angel came down from the stars and picked me - maybe at random, maybe not. I was just a guy. A normal guy. And now I'm supposed to save worlds. Out there, everyone knows exactly what I'm supposed to be. I am Astroman - Sky Rider of the Cosmos. But down here? I don't know if I am even still Chase anymore. I can't tell anyone what I do. Can't explain where I go. Can't let anyone actually know me.

(beat)

Except now...you?

(beat - - he sits down on the couch next to Sam)

You asked why I need a roommate when I could afford this place on my own. Because when I come home, you don't see Astroman. You see a guy who eats your leftover Chinese and forgets to clean the bathroom. And that's the only real thing I have left.

SAM

...Oh.

CHASE

You are the most important person in the world to me, Sam. You're the only normal thing in my life. The only thing that doesn't need saving. And I don't know what we'd do if you were to leave.

SAM

Really?

CHASE

Yeah, really.

SAM

But now...now that we know each other's secrets...?

CHASE

I don't know. I don't have all the answers. But what I do know is that I find a strange comfort in knowing that, when I am away, my city and my home are being protected by someone like the Ocelot.

SAM

Even though I got my ass handed to me by Mech-Gorilla?

CHASE

Hell, that's nothing. I've failed entire interspatial dimensions. We all fail, Sam. Falling short isn't a sign of weakness. But rising from it and still giving our all is the true test of real strength.

(beat)

I dunno. Or maybe that's just the sort B.S. that I need to tell myself to get through the day.

SAM

Yeah...It works for me, though.

(They sit silently for a moment before Chase picks up Sam's duffel bag and dumps it out on the coffee table. Sam smiles as Chase notices and picks up the domino mask - lifting it to his face.)

CHASE

Look at me. I'm the Ocelot.

SAM

Shut up.

CHASE

Hey. How about, after I finish with my laundry, you let me head on out and deal with Mech-Gorilla my own way? Please.

SAM

Just this once. I'm not quitting.

CHASE

Of course not. You're just banged up.

SAM

And I'm not going to be your sidekick.

CHASE

No way. Miguel wouldn't stand for it.

(Sam starts folding his clothes again and putting them back into his laundry basket. Chase goes and gets the damp Ocelot suit from across the room.)

CHASE

You want me to toss this in the dryer for you?

SAM

Yeah. That would be great.

(Chase heads towards the laundry room, then pauses)

CHASE

Sam?

SAM

Yeah?

CHASE

If you want, you can have laundry day next Saturday.

SAM

(small smile)

That sounds good.

(Chase exits to the laundry room. Sam picks up the domino mask, looks at it for a moment, and places it gently on top of his folded clothes in the laundry basket.)

SAM

(calling toward the laundry room)

And Chase? Call me when you're finished gorilla busting, I'll order some Thai food.

THE END