

LAUNDROMAT BLUES

Written by

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INT. LAUNDROMAT - DAY

Checkered linoleum. Empty washers face empty dryers.
Floor-bolted, molded plastic chairs split the middle.

Beyond the plate glass dotted with faded paper signs,
human beings stroll with animated characters outside.

Inside, a blur of movement near one chair as a chirpy
voice BLARES from a wall-mounted TV.

ON IT

TV host, BERNICE BAXTER, 30s, a hazel-eyed stunner,
interviews Progressive Insurance's animated spokesmodel,
the blue and white PROGRESSIVE INSURANCE BOX.

BERNICE BAXTER

What did you do before Progressive made
you their spokesperson?

PROGRESSIVE BOX

Well I uh, I was, I kinda, ya know, I
mean, uh...Sorry, what was the question?

SPONGEBOB (O.S.)

Ooh! PB, you're dyin' up there.

A tiny yellow hand slams closed a dryer door. Then it
pulls a ginormous iPhone X from a pants pocket.

The hand reaches up to the face of its owner, SPONGEBOB
SQUAREPANTS. He types a text and sends it. Pops open a
can of V8 juice. Looks back to the TV.

ON THE TV

TRILL of a text. The Progressive Box shivers and yanks
phone from his pocket.

BERNICE BAXTER

Wait, did you just get a text? I'm sorry,
am I boring you?

PROGRESSIVE BOX

It's from my bro, SpongeBob SquarePants.

Audience CLAPS.

BERNICE BAXTER

Well, in that case--

PROGRESSIVE BOX

He says, "Tell her before you made it big, you were a box at Amazon."

Audience LAUGHS.

PROGRESSIVE BOX (CONT'D)

True. True. And before that, Bernice, I was in gift wrapping at Macy's.

BACK IN THE LAUNDROMAT

SpongeBob dances and laughs atop dryer. Between his own belly laughs and the dryer's vibrations, he loses his balance, and spills V8 juice on himself.

SPONGEBOB

Ding dang it!

Scans the laundromat. Sees nobody inside, so rips his clothes off and leaps from dryer to a chair to floor.

He glances his watch and runs naked to sink. Climbs atop and tightropes the edge over to faucet. Kicks faucet handle until water flows.

He two-hands a toothbrush from its holder. Scrubs powdered soap into his stained clothing.

The front door bell RING-A-LING-A-LINGS, as a BOY and his FATHER back through it. Each carry a clothes basket.

Naked SpongeBob jerks his head toward the door. Spies the humans. Kicks off the water flow, and jams his leg through a wet pants leg.

His leg soaks up the water and swells, which dries the pants. His waterlogged, swollen leg rips the pants to smithereens.

The boy and father shut the front door. Naked SpongeBob leaps to the floor and ducks behind one skinny sink leg. Boy and father trundle toward the washing machines.

SpongeBob angles toward his dryer. The boy and father load their clothes into a machine.

SpongeBob slinks behind them, strains to open his dryer door a crack. Slips inside, and snicks the door shut.

SPONGEBOB (CONT'D)

Hot, hot, hot!

Jumps around on the scorching clothes. The heat dries his leg. It shrinks. Balances on an unsteady pile to dress.

LAUNDROMAT LADY (O.S.)

Who the hell's tiny ass clothes are these
littering my sink?

SpongeBob plasters hands and face against dryer glass door. Singes face and palms.

SPONGEBOB

Hot, hot, hot!

Half-dressed, he tumbles from the dryer, rolls along floor, and rights himself behind the LAUNDROMAT LADY, 65, pinched face, angry eyes.

SPONGEBOB (CONT'D)

Pardon me, ma'am, those are mine.

Laundromat lady spins, spies Spongebob and kicks at him.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

Get away from me, ya damn toonie!

SpongeBob dodges her foot.

SPONGEBOB

Toonie? Where? I hate those guys, too.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

Out of my laundromat, freakin' toonie!

SPONGEBOB

Pardon me, ma'am, but that word is a
pejorative, hurtful word and I--

LAUNDROMAT LADY

Don't care. Your kind ruined my life.
You're not welcome here, toonie.

Throws the clothes from the sink into the trashcan.
SpongeBob jumps in after them. Laundromat Lady grabs his legs and yanks him out.

SPONGEBOB

I have the same right to use this
establishment as any other being.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

You must not have read my sign.

She launches him at the front door. He sails past the father and boy. His eyes lock with the boy's.

Turns in time to SPLAT eyeballs first against glass front door. As he slides down, the words on a sign appear:

WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE SERVICE TO ANYBODY

SpongeBob wobbles to his feet. Laundromat Lady zigs. He zags. He jumps into dryer. She pushes the start button.

The boy yanks open the dryer door. SpongeBob tumbles out. Laundromat Lady steps toward him. The Father steps in.

LAUNDROMAT LADY (CONT'D)

You think they're all cute and cuddly,
don't you? But they're not. They'll suck
all the laughter out of you only to
abandon you when need them most.

SpongeBob limps back to his dryer. Pulls clothes out. Dresses. Catches his reflection in the door. Flinches.

Laundromat Lady soccer kicks the full basket. It slides across the floor and slams into SpongeBob's parked bike. Bike shatters. SpongeBob pulls his phone off the dryer.

SPONGEBOB

You haven't seen the last of me.

EXT. LAUNDROMAT - CONTINUOUS

SpongeBob slogs down a dirty sidewalk. Checks his watch. Every drag of the basket kicks up dust onto his clothes.

An Uber pulls up. SpongeBob checks its license plate against his smartphone. Heads toward it. The Uber driver spots him, shakes his head and darts away.

SpongeBob texts Lyft. Drags laundry basket a few feet down the sidewalk before a Lyft pulls up. Lyft driver reacts exactly like Uber driver.

SpongeBob watches Lyft pull away, past a tiny sign on the horizon: BARNEY BROS. STUDIOS.

He eyeballs a taxicab. WHISTLES. Taxicab brakes hard at his feet.

CABBIE

Have you got cash?

SPONGEBOB

I have Apple Pay.

Cabbie shakes head and skedaddles. SpongeBob glances his watch. Looks again toward the studio sign. Looks at his laundry basket. Abandons it and limp jogs away.

HONK. HONK.

FATHER (O.S.)

You forgot your clothes.

SpongeBob turns to face a truck that keeps pace with his stride. From it, the boy and the father lean out.

BOY

Let us give you a ride.

FATHER

We're sorry. We should have stepped in.
It all happened so fast.

BOY

Plus you're animated. You guys get beat up all the time on your shows. We didn't know it wasn't staged for us until she--

FATHER

Tried to fry you in the dryer.

BOY

And kept calling you a toonie.

FATHER

Hey! Don't ever use that word again.

SpongeBob drags himself into the truck bed, next to his laundry basket.

EXT. BARNEY BROS. STUDIOS - DAY

The father stops the truck at the guardhouse.

SPONGEBOB

They're with me.

The guard raises the gate arm. Father drives through. Stops in front of a door with a sign: BERNICE BAXTER SHOW.

FATHER

We're sorry for all your troubles.

SPONGEBOB

Park the truck. You're with me.

Father and the boy exchange glances. They hop out and trail SpongeBob as he limps through a guarded door.

INT. BERNICE BAXTER SHOW STUDIO - CONTINUOUS

SpongeBob leans into an USHER. Points to boy and dad.

SPONGEBOB

They're with me. Best seats in the house.

He waves them goodbye and hobbles

BACKSTAGE

Where the Progressive Box greets him.

PROGRESSIVE BOX

SB, baby! You sure cut it close. You're on in fifteen seconds.

Assesses his friend.

PROGRESSIVE BOX (CONT'D)

You look like hell. Pulling a Tom Cruise and doing your own stunts now?

Snaps fingers. A make-up artist sidles up. Dabs SpongeBob's facial wounds with yellow color. They disappear. SpongeBob limps up to a large curtain.

SPONGEBOB

You wouldn't believe what--

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (O.S.)

STAND BY. We're back in ten, nine--

PROGRESSIVE BOX

I was dying out there. You really saved my cardboard with that text. Thanks, bro.

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Five, four...

SpongeBob winces and sags. He inhales deeply, closes his eyes. Exhales deeply. Repeats.

BERNICE BAXTER (O.S.)

Give it up for SpongeBob SquarePants!

SpongeBob lurches from the darkness to the blinding light

ON SET

Where he skips out and waves both arms. Jumps up on Bernice Baxter's desk. Plants a two-cheek, European hello kiss on her.

SpongeBob somersaults into his guest chair, and settles onto the booster cushion. Audience APPLAUDS.

BERNICE BAXTER (CONT'D)

You know you're my favorite Animate,
right? Today for her birthday, I want you
to meet my favorite human in the world!

The band strikes up HAPPY BIRTHDAY and the audience joins in. The Assistant Director escorts Berry's blindfolded mother onto the set.

Band done, the audience APPLAUDS. Assistant Director removes blindfold. Berry's mother is the Laundromat Lady!

SPONGEBOB

YOU!

LAUNDROMAT LADY

YOU!

FATHER AND BOY

HER!

Laundromat Lady turns to leave. Assistant Director nudges her into seat next to SpongeBob. She holds her breath.

BERNICE BAXTER

Mummy, stop! She's a laugh riot, plain-spoken businesswoman who owns her own laundromat on Cahuenga Boulevard.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

(exhales sharply)

Was a single mother. Had to work, hard.

Inhales and holds her breath again.

BERNICE BAXTER

Remember how you'd plop me down in front of the TV while you toiled away? What show did you always put on for me?

LAUNDROMAT LADY

SpongeBob SquarePants.

AUDIENCE

Awwwww.

BERNICE BAXTER

You must have loved him as much as I did.
That's why I brought you two together
today as my sixty-fifth birthday present
to you!

AUDIENCE

Awwww!

LAUNDROMAT LADY

Love? Him? No. He's a toon--

Audience GASPS.

LAUNDROMAT LADY (CONT'D)

Er--

SPONGEBOB

I actually met your mother earlier today!

BERNICE BAXTER

You did?

SPONGEBOB

At that very laundromat on Cahuenga.

Father and boy GASP. Laundromat Lady/Mummy cringes.

SPONGEBOB (CONT'D)

You know when Progressive Box got that
text? That's where I was. Dancing on a
dryer. Spilled V8 on myself. Had to strip
off all my clothes...

Audience GASPS.

FLASHBACK - LAUNDROMAT

Fast forward replay of events. Instead of chase and
fight, Laundromat Lady irons and sews up his torn, wet
clothing, and puts folded, dry clothes into his basket.

BACK TO PRESENT

SPONGEBOB (CONT'D)

...And that's how I got to know this
grand old dame of a lady you call Mummy.

Laundromat Lady grabs SpongeBob into a bear hug.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

I'm so sorry I called you a toonie.

SPONGEBOB

Most of us aren't out to get you.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

It's just that...I was madly in love with one of you once. I even bore his child...Bernice, I never told you but--

BERNICE BAXTER

I'm half animated and SpongeBob is my father? Is that why you made me watch him everyday? To learn about my daddy?

LAUNDROMAT LADY

Half-animated, yes. Not him, though. Babar, the Elephant. Left me once he discovered I was pregnant with you.

Audience GASPS.

BERNICE BAXTER

I always knew I was different.

SPONGEBOB

Thank God you got your mother's nose.

LAUNDROMAT LADY

I hated all toon--Animates, until today, Thanks to you, SpongeBob, my hate is gone. I can love all kinds...

APPLAUSE. Laundromat Lady grabs his tiny hand and stands. Bernice grabs his other hand and stands. SpongeBob dangles between them, chokes back vomit and smiles.

SPONGEBOB

(whispers)

I'm no Rosa Parks. Free laundry for life, ya'll dig?