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## Tuesday Morning

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# Tuesday Morning

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**Author Bio**

Jennifer Marta Logan was born to be a visionary. She is a leader among leaders, student ambassador to the lands of the mysterious Orient, professional baked goods artiste, costume-maker extraordinaire, and warrior of the noble art of kendo. She is so badass that the city of Atlanta decided to name its metro service after her two decades before she was born- a testament to her timeless fame. Truly, the finest mind of her generation.

## Tuesday Morning

The dryer squeaks. Every time it gets to that one point where all the clothes reach the upper left edge of the window before they fall back down, the dryer squeaks. It's not a very loud noise. In fact, had this place been full with its usual crowd, I might not have noticed it at all. And if she were here with me the way she used to be, it's quite likely that I wouldn't have noticed any sound at all other than her voice. This morning, though, it is nearly deserted. Well, not nearly—it is most definitely deserted. With the exception of the old woman sitting at her desk in the back room, I am the only one here.

It's quite relaxing, actually. It's like an escape from chaos, like finding yourself in the eye of a tornado. I'm ignoring the fact that being in the middle of a circle of high-speed wind means I'll have to make my way through them again to get out to the real world. But then the real world isn't that much better. I'd rather be stuck in the middle of a tornado than try to fight my way through the bustling crowds full of people, all too rushed to notice they just knocked the coffee out of your hand and all over your freshly-laundered shirt. It's a necessary evil of being a part of the business world, I guess. But for now, it's just me and the squeaking dryer and the old woman, and I am perfectly fine with that.

I'll sit here for a bit longer and listen to the hum of the machine. It's late, but I have nothing else to do. Scratch that—it's early, at least according to most people's standards. Five in the morning is generally a time when people would be waking up, not sitting around at a laundromat thinking about the sleep they aren't getting and haven't been able to get for so long. I wonder why the old woman is up so early. Maybe she can't sleep, either, or maybe she's just an early riser. We used to be like that. We used to get up before the sun rose and take the dogs for a run in the park before work. They loved that, and every morning they would whine outside our bedroom door, waiting until their anticipation and excitement woke us. It worked, too—those dogs were better than alarm clocks. I stopped setting mine after a while because it just wasn't as reliable. Maybe I should start setting it again. It might help me get back on a regular schedule.

The clothes are already dry, but I put some more money into the machine anyway. It's not like I have anywhere else to go. God, these clothes weren't even dirty. I don't even know why I brought them here. It just seemed like I had to, like everything I had had to be cleaned—laundry was the first step. Laundry was also the step that got me out of the house. I couldn't stay there any longer looking at all of her things. There are just too many memories that I don't need to remember right now.

I'd rather be stuck in the middle of a tornado than try to fight my way through the bustling crowds full of people all too rushed to notice they just knocked the coffee out of your hand...

"...Orange?"

"I'm sorry, what?" I was so caught up in trying to avoid those thoughts that I didn't even notice the old woman had gotten up and walked over to me.

"Would you like an orange?" she asks again. In her outstretched hand she holds the brightly colored fruit; its sharp scent brings me a little closer to the present. Her knobby fingers hold it securely as it rests in her palm. How old is she? In her eighties? She hadn't looked that old from across the room, but her hands give it away. The skin is wrinkled, loose, her knuckles the victims of years of arthritis. I wonder if *her* hands would have been like that when she got older. I wonder if we still would have been together by then. It would have been wonderful to be old with her, to watch kids playing in the park while we sat peacefully on a bench under a tree with rings older than the ones on our fingers. I see couples like that when I go out on my lunch break. They look so content just to be with each other.

The old woman has just placed two oranges on the table and proceeds to sit down in the chair next to me. She seems to have taken my silence as an invitation.

"I've always thought that oranges are a wonderful remedy."

"For what?" I'm not in the mood for conversation, but since there's no one else for her to talk to, I have to fill the role.

"Oh, lots of things. They're wonderful for colds, you know, lots of vitamin C. And they always lift the spirit. Have you ever seen anyone eat an orange while they're upset? I haven't. No, after all these years, I haven't *once* seen someone eat an orange when they're sad." She takes one of the oranges and begins to peel it clumsily, her stiff fingers shaking as she struggles with the tough skin.

"Here, let me do it," I say as I take the orange from her hands. She smiles gratefully and continues talking while I expertly tear off the outer layer of the fruit. We always used to have oranges before our morning run, and I was in charge of peeling them while she got the leashes for the dogs.

"It's a nice morning, isn't it? Not a time many people do laundry, but I like to open early just in case. You never know who will show up with an emergency." I pass her half of the orange and we sit in silence for a few moments, trying to eat carefully so the juice doesn't get all over our hands. It's sweet, but still tart enough to make my mouth pucker a bit with the first bite. The squeak from the dryer doesn't seem as loud as it did before.

"Good orange, isn't it? My daughter brought them along when she came to visit a few days ago." She pauses and waits expectantly. Sensing that she won't get a reply from me anytime soon, she continues. "You're not very talkative, are you? That's all right; I could probably talk to myself for a week straight and not run out of things to say! My husband used to tell me that, actually. He always complained about it, but then when I wasn't talking, he would get upset and think something was wrong. Imagine that! Either way, he wasn't happy." She looks down at the orange in her hands and laughs a little, shaking her head as a smile crosses her face. She suddenly seems very tired; the thin laugh makes her slight frame tremble and the wrinkles around her mouth give her smile the appearance of a painful grimace. The echoes of her voice fade quickly, and we lapse back into silence and finish

our orange. My eyes settle on the remains of the peel on the table in front of us. Already, the heat of the room has caused it to dry up and lose the bright sheen that had made it so appealing. It seems almost shameful compared to the whole, fresh orange next to it.

We remain wordless as I pick up the second orange. It's firm and heavy, and I toss it back and forth between my hands before peeling it. The sun has gotten high enough by this point to peek over the strip mall across the street; gold stripes stretch across the floor beside us and make sharp reflections off the bits of chrome on the machines. I pile up the peel of this orange next to the old one, and the way the morning sun hits it almost makes it look like it's still part of the orange instead of the discarded husk. Piecing it back together doesn't work—it won't stay in the shape I want it to without the fruit inside, especially not since I tore it apart.

I let it fall back into a pile and split the orange in half to share with the old woman. We eat together without a word, watching the stripes of sunlight stretch across the floor as the morning grows later. Someone comes in to use the change machine in the corner, or at least I would assume so from the sound of the bell on the door handle and the clinking of coins. Although they don't interrupt us, their departure makes the silence in the room seem greater than before. Or maybe it's because the dryer has stopped—I hadn't even noticed.