

Hitchbot

It all just happened.

He was stalking down the sidewalk with a thunderstorm in his head. He saw the Hitchbot sitting there. He went to town on it. That was it.

It was the middle of the night, and he assumed no one could see him.

The thing was sitting on the bench at a bus stop near the roundabout at Oakland and Pleasant River. He'd walked three miles by then. He was on his way home from the job he'd just lost at the Red Robin in the Ten Willows strip mall.

"That'll do," was the last thing the manager, Rhonda, had said to him. It was strangely archaic and infuriatingly formal. Something final and medieval about it.

And so he was jobless. Again.

His PO would no doubt give him more shit about this. More tragic disappointment in his eyes, like the smarmy bastard expected better and could hardly believe he was being let down. Like a saddened little brother – the guy was at least five years younger than him. Bullshit.

Natasha would not appreciate this. He'd get quite the earful when he got home. She'd hung up on him when he'd called her, asking for an early ride back.

"What do you mean they're letting you go?" she'd said, too calmly, when he gave her the news.

"I mean I'm off the clock, and I need a ride," he said. "Please, babe, my head's hurting again. I need to come home and sleep this off. I'll start looking for something else in the morning."

No response. He looked at the phone. Back to the home screen. Not even an exit beep.

He put the phone back in his pocket and felt sick and angry. Cars rushed by, a lovely evening in suburbia. Families in minivans and

retired couples in sedans, whooshing along in their air-conditioned pleasantry.

He'd been a dishwasher for about two weeks. He couldn't even hang on to a shitty job like that.

He was a failure. A recovering drug addict. This much he knew.

He tried calling Tony, then Earl, then Jovee, then Antonio. None of them were able to come get him for one reason or another. Jovee and Antonio didn't even answer. He even tried Chad, his PO, who said, "I would, man, but I'm up north this weekend. Have you tried Jovee yet?"

He didn't have any money for a cab, or an Uber. He had nothing. His first and only paycheck would be coming later that week.

Chad wasn't a bad guy. Natasha wasn't a bad woman. Rhonde wasn't a bad woman.

He was. He was the bad guy.

He sat on the curb near the front door. People going into the restaurant were afraid of him. He could feel their suspicious looks at his back. He hated the looks, but he didn't hate them. He didn't blame them. He wished he could be like them.

The sun was almost set, and the sky was clear and lavender. It was getting colder. Without thinking, he got up and took off on foot.

He walked and walked, heading home along the road, under the streetlights. He passed gas stations and supermarkets and restaurants, all lit up with happy people inside, living their lives and enjoying their places in the world.

By the time he got close to New Hudson it was nearly midnight, and the streets were empty and lonely. Cars with blinding headlights drove past, not seeing him. Their headlights made his headache worse. It throbbed at his temples. He thought about throwing himself in front of them, but couldn't make himself do it. What would that do to the person behind the wheel? How would they feel?

He walked and walked, one foot in front of the other.

When he first saw the Hitchbot he thought it was a random trash can someone had set upside down on the bench at the bus stop.

As he got closer he saw it was indeed an upside down trash can or a bucket of some kind. It had been turned into a little child-size robot toy thing.

It had what looked like a clear mixing bowl – also turned upside down – for a head. Under the bowl was an electronic display with a red smiley face on it. Its arms were foam noodle pool floaties with yellow gloves attached to the ends. Its legs were also foam pool noodles, with a child's yellow rain boots attached. It sat strapped into a little black car seat.

He stared at it, sitting there on the bench.

'Hitchbot' was written across its chest. A white piece of tape with "San Francisco or Bust" was stuck on its helmet, just below its pixelated red smile.

He pulled out his six year old iPhone and Googled 'Hitchbot.'

He noticed its left arm was stuck out, the fat rubber thumb cocked, all awkward like a scarecrow's. Like it was hitchhiking.

Articles popped up on Google. He read. It was an Internet stunt. This thing was hitchhiking across the country. This thing made of kid's clothes and pool toys.

Some asshole who probably made more money in a day than he had ever made in his life had put this thing together and told the Internet. People had noticed it. They had noticed this rich hipster cunt's hip little idea. People paid attention to this thing. People cared about it. This piece of plastic and foam.

It had started in Boston and made it all the way to suburban Detroit. Some YouTube star had picked it up in Philly. The zoomer fuck had taken a selfie with the thing in his backseat, making some goofy face with his thumb cocked back at it. What an absolute faggot.

Meanwhile, he was flesh and blood. Carbon and electricity. And what did he get?

Nothing. Even his own supposed friends wouldn't give him a ride home. He had no money, no way of making money. All because of a 2 year prison stint. Non-violent offense.

Someone had gotten out of their car in Ohio, picked this thing up, drove it here of their own volition, and dropped it off at the bus stop. Before long, someone else would pick it up, and it would continue on its journey, and everyone would smile and think how kind people are and how cute and isn't the world such a nice place?

His own girlfriend wouldn't even give him a ride home after he lost his job. While he was on probation. While he still owed money to the state. While he was trying, fucking TRYING, to go straight. And he couldn't even wash dishes for two weeks. What a fuck-up. His father was right.

How dare this stupid fucking thing sit here under the streetlight and smile at him? This fucking plastic trashcan with its goofy fucking face. This random children's toy receiving more love and acceptance and chances than he ever had.

He raised a foot and kicked it. It fell over on the bench in its car seat. Its arms flopped about bonelessly.

He kicked it again. It fell off the bench and clomped to the sidewalk, rolled a bit.

He saw he'd scuffed the side of its plastic bowl head.

It was still smiling up at him.

He lost control.

He kicked it again and again. He stomped on it.

It broke apart with every blow. Into pieces, into shards.

"Why are you still smiling?" he snarled down at it.

He brought his foot down again and again.

He ripped its foam arms off. Its foam legs.

It never make a sound.

He tore it out of its stupid carseat and flung the carseat into the brush.

His head pounded from within, making him think of a pulsating red orb.

When the storm had passed he stopped and looked at his handiwork, the thing scattered before him. Its red smiley face was gone, black blankness behind the shattered clear plastic bowl.

For some reason, he thought of the Wizard of Oz, right after the Scarecrow was torn apart by the flying monkeys, the Tin Man saying, "Oh, that's you all over, isn't it?"

He breathed heavily, calming down enough to realize he could've waited until someone gave the thing a ride and then perhaps bummed one.

Actually, no. No one would've stopped while he was here anyway. And if they had, they would've just taken the goddamn robot and refused to take him. It was guaranteed. Given some thinly veiled excuse. They would've looked at him like people always did—like they were uneasy, uncomfortable, repulsed.

That was more than likely what would've happened. And it most certainly would've been more than he could handle.

He looked at the real-life Internet meme he'd just wrecked. How many people's fun had he spoiled with his tantrum? Wrong place, wrong time. Story of his life.

Heavy shame draped over him like a warm, wet, unwelcome blanket.

He put his hands in his pockets. Looked around. No one was there, and no cars had come by. God knew why the Hitchbot's last chauffeurs had dropped the thing off way down at the end of the street like this.

They probably thought someone would be less likely to find it and fuck it up.

He looked at the Hitchbot one more time, its arms and legs and broken body, and walked off. He had the sudden sensation he was being watched.

He made it home and slept on the couch, not wanting to risk waking up Natasha.

He awoke in the morning, feeling like he was being shaken. He opened his eyes. It was gray and gloomy, soft white light seeping through the blinds.

His head felt better, the pain dulled down to a single silver thread of discomfort in his temple.

He'd fallen asleep sitting up.

He opened his laptop on the coffee table, checked Google News, like he did every morning.

In the US section he saw something that made him stop and begin to sweat.

"Hitchbot, hitchhiking robot, gets beheaded outside of Detroit" said the third headline.

He clicked on the real-time coverage button and read, his heart pounding.

"Good Job, America, You Killed Hitchbot"

"Hitchhiking Robot Lasts Just Two Weeks In America Because Humans Are..."

"Hitchhiking Can Be Dangerous, Even for Robots"

"Hitchhiking Robot Gets Killed in Detroit, To No One's Surprise"

"Hitchhiking Robot Damaged Beyond Repair in Detroit"

"Hitchbot is Dead Because Detroit"

The bedroom door opened and he started.

Natasha walked out, puffy with sleep.

"I want you out of here," she said, flipping through her own phone and not looking at him. "I'm sorry, but you've got to find somewhere else to live."

"K," he said, distracted.

He kept scrolling through his phone. It didn't look like anyone had seen him. There were no videos.

Everyone in the comments was reviling him, calling him a loser and a lowlife and everything else. He didn't blame them. He wished he hadn't lost his temper. He'd been upset and stressed out and tired and sad and angry. He was always sad and angry.

Apparently the Hitchbot had sent out a message when it had gone offline. Probably at the moment he'd stomped on the thing's plastic mixing bowl helmet.

"Oh dear, my body was damaged, but I live on back home and with all my friends," the message read. "I guess sometimes bad things happen to good robots! My trip must come to an end for now, but my love for humans will never fade. Thank you to all my friends."

He shut his phone off and watched Natasha as she made coffee. She had work that morning.

"I need you out, like, today," she said, still not looking at him.

"K," he said.

He sat there on the couch and tried to think of who he could crash with.

In a way, this was a new beginning.

Drag

I was driving north in Ypsilanti around the projects near the old hospital— this big block of shitty apartments with a shitty parking lot. It was sunrise, and the end of November was creeping up on us. Frost was on the ground and the air was numbing and the puddles were all brown ice.

I was taking a shortcut-- the circular outer drive that goes around the projects-- to get from Huron Drive to Golfside. In doing so I'd avoid the extra-long light at the main intersection.

I was in a hurry but not speeding and I don't remember where I was going.

The guy — I didn't know he was a guy at the time — was crouched in the center of the lane about halfway around the scythe-shaped road. Like I said, I wasn't even going that fast, only about twenty or so. No more than thirty for sure.

Initially I thought he was a bag of garbage that could easily be straddled with my wheels, but then he turned and sat up at the last second. It was too late, and I was on him. I don't know why he didn't hear me coming. I don't know why he didn't move.

He was white — Caucasian, that is — which was somewhat odd for a homeless person in the area. He had red hair, an angular face — looked kind of like Prince Harry, actually. Prince Harry without the muscles or the ultra-privileged upbringing.

He was wearing a black jacket and wrapped in what might have been a black sleeping bag or some kind of utility blanket. He'd been sleeping right in the middle of the road. Maybe it was warmer there somehow, or maybe he was kind of half hoping some poor sap like myself would come along and put him out of his misery.

I plowed right into him before I could hit the brakes. He went under my front end. I drive a mid-size sedan and I could feel him getting dragged under the car for what felt like several minutes. It was the worst sound I've ever heard. He didn't scream. Or if he did I couldn't hear him.

You don't realize how heavy a car is until you need to stop it instantly.

It happened so fast. Dumb, cliche words. But it did. One second, I was about to go over a stray trash bag, the next I was about to hit a guy, the next he was under me, and the next I was over him and he'd slid out from under me, the car bouncing over him. He felt like a speed bump.

I was horrified – beyond horrified – in fact. My insides had this feeling like I'd been injected with mercury or some other cold liquid metal. Some poison glassy liquid.

My hands trembling, I cranked the wheel and turned around as soon as possible, and now to my despair I saw there were people from the housing projects beginning to appear and gather around the crumpled black hump in the road.

I don't know where the people had been a moment before – the parking lot is big and they couldn't have just walked across it without me seeing them. The torn-up lot was completely empty and the asphalt was grey with snow and ice.

I was in too much shock to do much of anything but gape as I drove by the lifeless mess I'd turned this guy into. I saw his face first – it was still intact, and his eyes were open, staring up into the blue morning sky. Of course he wasn't moving. I'd slammed right into him hard enough to crack my bumper and then dragged him along icy pavement full of potholes and cracks and fissures. He was fucked up, if he was going to live at all.

I parked nearby, pulling neatly into a spot with faded lines.

I called 911, not believing anything. The world seemed strangely turned up, everything too loud and too bright.

The operator came on and I couldn't remember the name of the road I was on. I couldn't remember the name of this sickle-shaped shortcut or the name of the project building. The projects building had been a hospital once. That was decades ago. Now it was a hastily-assigned tower for the destitute. There were a ton of destitute people nowadays. Even people who worked were destitute.

There were people gathered all around him now, and most of them were black. It was good thing the guy was white otherwise they'd of probably ripped me from the car and kicked the shit out of me, or worse. They all mumbled grimly to each other.

I got off the phone with the operator, and I don't remember our conversation. Almost instantly after hanging up, I heard sirens in the distance.

I got out of my car and walked over to the gathered spectators, but I wasn't walking. I was floating.

"I didn't see him," I said.

No one answered me, they all just looked at him lying there and I couldn't look at him anymore. I wanted to cry but I couldn't do that, either. The world stayed turned up, really bright and intense and too much everything.

Once the cops arrived they took me back over to my car while they put a plastic sheet over the body.

The cops were very accommodating but seemed bored. They didn't cuff me or read me my rights but I was pretty sure I was under arrest.

It took me a minute or two to calm down, but someone brought me a little bottle of water and I was sipping it and the water was so cold it was burning my fingers and tongue but I kept sipping. I felt like I hadn't blinked since the moment I saw the guy sit up.

The cop talking to me had grey hair coming out of his ears and he was writing on a clipboard.

"I didn't see him," I said again. I didn't want to say I'd mistaken him for garbage.

"Well, that's why they call 'em accidents," the cop said. "They don't call 'em 'on-purposes'."

Nut Sauce

Connie Snapchatted me and said she wasn't sure if she wanted to meet, but we had plans that Friday and the fucking quarantine wasn't stopping them. I'd paid for her Onlyfans and her allowance at the beginning of the month and I wasn't going to miss my designated weekend. My dick had been dry since January, the last time I'd seen her.

I'm a 33 year old boomer and I haven't been sleeping right since all this bullshit started so forgive me if my thoughts and narration are a little erratic here. Going to be a lot of stream of consciousness brain-dumping going on. I'm just not a good writer, or a good anything, really. Sorry to the professionals.

I was jamming on that Bored in the House song all Friday. Everyone thinks Tyga made it but it's actually this genius artist from Detroit named Curtis Roach. I don't know anything else he's done but fuck does that song slap. I love that the beat is just his fist on a wood floor and fingersnaps. I get nothing but good vibes off the guy.

I picked Connie up at her place on Friday night. By then I was listening to Keith Urban's version of Higher Love on repeat. I'm not even a huge country fan or a Steve Winwood fan or anything but for some reason I ripped it off YouTube after that shitty Zoom telethon thing Lady Gaga put on. I just like the way his voice hits those notes, that kind of sugary, nasal country twang thing he does. You'd never know the dude was from 'Straya. I made a playlist of Keith and Bored in the House and jammed them both on repeat all fucking week.

I told Connie about it all when I got to her place. She said she hadn't heard either song yet.

Connie's a cam girl and e-thot who makes like five figures a month. But I still get her for my price (20\$ a month on onlyfans, \$500 a month from seekingarrangement) so I'm fine with it. I've known her for several years so I got grandfathered in. Doesn't take much to make a SWAM like me happy. I know I'm worthless in the big scheme of things. Not that it matters right now.

Connie's a brunette, looks Hispanic but I've never asked her nationality. She has that supremely cooled vibe of someone who never has to worry about human attention. The free air of someone who can walk away and always find someone else. I hate that about her and anyone else who has it. I see it on Joe Burrow all the time, if you need a famous reference. That Alison Roman cooking chick, too. I hate them. They are valuable and I am worthless but hey that's life.

The \$500 a month isn't a lot – from her other sugar daddies Connie probably gets like at least a grand or more a month, but I was one of Connie's first regulars. I was her first date after she posted on seekingarrangement. Plus, I'm way younger and better-looking than most of the other sugar daddies, which isn't to say I'm good-looking, exactly.

I've been staying at my parents during the lockdown. I had an apartment but I broke the lease when everything shut down and I stopped working. I'll get another one when we're back to normal. A job, that is. And an apartment. I made good money – I worked in sales – and I was smart with it so I'm living off some investments I made and savings. I can make it probably nine months before I need to start panicking.

My sleep schedule is so fucked. I cannot lie down and try to sleep if I'm not tired. It's like, I'm afraid of fear when I close my eyes. But I don't want to talk about that. So I just sleep when I can. But my body never wants to be tired at the same time. It'll be tired one day at 8 PM like you're supposed to be, and then another day it'll be tired at 2 AM and then I'll sleep ten hours and then be up all night until 7 the next morning. It's fucked. I've always had this problem but it really started after I quit my job.

The door was open when I pulled up to Connie's. She's got this nice little one story number on a nice little suburban street. You'd never guess an e-thot lived here.

The front door was open. She was in the kitchen, eating cold chicken off a cadaverous rotisserie bird. We hugged. It was good to see her.

"Why are you so much taller than me?" I asked, noting her unusual height.

"I'm wearing heels."

Sure enough, she had these stiletto numbers on.

"Take them off."

She did and was a bit shorter than me. That was better. Tall women freak me out.

"How you been?" I asked. "I've missed you."

We hadn't seen each other in months. One thing or another kept coming up, and Covid wasn't helping.

"I can only spend tonight with you," she said. "One of my other regs wants me for tomorrow and I need the money. I'll make it up to you next month."

"How many regs do you have, even?"

"Like twelve. Don't get pissy."

"Well, yeah," I said, getting exactly pissy. "I know that. Every young hot woman these days has an option to be a Disney princess, basically. Every dude is replaceable, even the attractive, successful ones."

"Have you slept?"

"Yeah, I got like two hours yesterday evening."

"That is literally going to kill you."

I took Connie back to my parents' place. The drive was really nice. The sun was so fucking bright and Keith sang about higher love and Curtis rapped about being bored in the house. I tapped my hands on the steering wheel and Connie fucking texted next to me. We saw the setting sun and trees and cows and you'd never know there was a pandemic going on.

When we got home I discovered my sister Violet was already there, sitting downstairs in front of the TV. I didn't know she would be home – I thought they all went over to my grandparents to help with the garden. My grandparents can't go outside right now since they're in their eighties, so Violet and my parents go over there and weed the garden and other shit while my grandparents smile and wave from the living room window. I went once and now I make up excuses not to go.

I snuck Connie in quietly, cursing my decision to give away my apartment, took her upstairs to the bathroom. I wanted my money's worth, but of course I didn't say that out loud. I was also hoping a good fuck would help me sleep.

So I tried to fuck Connie in the upstairs shower but she wasn't responding. I was admittedly thirsty. I'm not an incel but I'm

definitely not worthy enough to attract a woman without waving some money around. C'est la vie.

We went into the bathroom and got naked.

Every time I stripped down in front of Connie she'd mention my square-shaped dick. It was weird. She kept mentioning it because she said her dad's dick was square-shaped too. Her dad raped her when she was a little girl, like six or something. I asked her once, "What did he do with you?" and she looked at me and went, "Everything." and I was like, "Awww..." all sad-like (I wasn't being sarcastic at all, I meant it, that's fucked up) and she didn't say anything.

So yeah, she told me her dad's dick was square-shaped yet again when we were getting naked. I told her I didn't need to hear that.

"You bring it up every fucking time this happens."

"You would, too."

I was already hard and so Connie bent down and went to work for that five hundred dollars I'd sent her at the beginning of the month. I let her slobber for a bit, probing the inside of her sweet 24-year-old mouth with my dickhead and then I stopped her.

We stepped into the shower, which was already running and was nice and steamy like a porno.

I started trying to fuck her, trying to get it in. But it was like it wasn't fitting. The water was hot and steamy and it made us nice and slippery. Her body looked way hot, even if her face was kind of jacked.

Connie looked like Kate Mara if Kate Mara had a baby with that maid from that one Roma movie – it's in black in white, I don't remember much about it, I just remember the maid because she had a baby but it was stillborn. Then she saves the rich kids from drowning. I don't know, I was fucking high that day when I watched it, but I remember the maid and I know who Kate Mara is and that's what Connie looks like – a blend of Kate Mara and the Mexican native maid from Roma. But she's got a tight little body and a nice tummy and a great, smooth ass.

"Stop, stop, STOP," Connie said after a few minutes of me poking my boner into her squishiness. The water roared and my ears were pounding, I was so fucking horny. I kept trying to stick it in until Connie pushed me away and I almost slipped. Would've been a hell of a crash if I'd fell over, and possibly a serious injury. No one wants to go to the hospital right now.

Connie didn't say anything, just stood there with water dripping off her in the steam, looking at me all pissed off.

My lust cooled down a bit. My dick softened. I took it in my hand and kept stroking, not wanting to lose the fire.

"Sorry," I said, tugging. "Won't happen again."

Connie rolled her eyes.

"Just cum already," she said, kneeling down and taking me into her mouth for the second time.

I obliged her after another five minutes of jerkage and ball sucking, spraying nut sauce all over her face, trying not to groan too loud.

"That was just what I needed," I wheezed when it was over.

Connie stood up and mumbled to herself, "Yep, it's a beauty..." before rinsing her face off, kneeling under the shower stream. She looked like a Renaissance statue for a second there, water hitting her face, her eyes closed as she washed my chunky egg goop cum off her lips and cheeks. Then she stood up and used my sister's shampoo and bodywash without asking while I tried to hug her from behind, sticking my soft cock between her ass cheeks. She acted like I wasn't even there.

After, we went to my bedroom and Connie went on her phone again while I found a Netflix movie with George Clooney called Michael Clayton, I think he played a lawyer or something, but Connie wasn't interested in it. I just wanted to cuddle her anyway.

She fell asleep briefly but she was on my arm funny so I moved and she woke up and looked at me like she wanted to kill me. I just lay there, not tired.

Then two minutes later she started texting again and she started crying.

"What is it?" I asked.

She didn't answer for a second.

"What is it?" I asked again.

"I think my grandma has the virus and I can't see her."

"Where's she live?"

"California."

"Not much you can do about that."

Connie turned away.

"It's hard," I heard her say. She wasn't talking to me. "It's so fucking hard sometimes..."

I wanted to cuddle her more but I figured I'd best leave her be. She was technically fulfilling her part of the bargain — spending the night with me. And my balls were already drained so I wasn't itching for that part of the arrangement anymore.

We fell asleep apart from each other. The more I thought about it, I was getting sick of her, honestly. Her attitude.

At least pretend you're interested, I thought. It's not like she was doing this for nothing. The more I thought about it, the more I thought it was bullshit. I wasn't getting what I paid for. Low effort.

The next morning my sister Violet drove us in my dad's truck to Brighton. Connie had given us this address. The houses were so enormous they made my parents neighborhood look middle class. I could've taken my car but Violet was downstairs eating Rice Krispies when we got up and said she had to go into town anyway. Connie had woken me up and I was groggy as hell so I didn't give a shit anymore.

My sister didn't really care about me spending time with Connie anyway. I brought home girls all the time when we were teenagers and in college. She just talked a lot. She told us she was getting ripped off over these concert tickets she bought. The concert got canceled because of the Rona and they were jerking her around on the refund. It was this country show she was going to in the summer but it got canceled and the guy who sold her the tickets was being a cunt about it. The artists were all guys with beards.

Connie sat in the back on her phone, not talking to us.

We drove through the sub under beautiful sunlight and along big, beautiful homes. Expensive cars in the perfect driveways. Trees with flowers.

"The house was back there," said Connie after we'd driven a bit.

We turned around and went back up the street. The house looked like all the others — big and successful. The guy must be a doctor or something. I was jealous — this motherfucker could afford multiple sugar babies. Why the fuck did he need mine?

I got out to talk to Connie. I wasn't going to stand for this shit anymore. I wanted to say a bunch of shit but I couldn't come up with anything other than, "I'm not paying to see you anymore. This is pointless."

"K," was all Connie said.

"Well, we should probably make a parting gift," I said.

The world was really bright, the sunlight making everything bleached and white.

"Like what?" said Connie, eyeing me suspiciously.

I looked around and saw a little lone dandelion growing out of a crack in the cement by a sewer grate. I bent down and picked it and handed it to Connie.

"That's for you," I said.

"Thanks," said Connie monotonously. "Go get some sleep."

She walked off to one of her twelve sugar daddies. It was the last time I saw her.

My sister and I stopped at the post office. Then we went home where I jerked off and finally fell asleep.