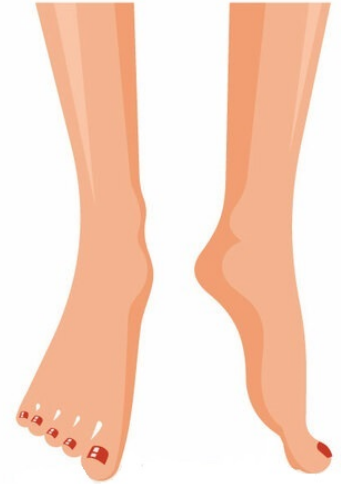


The Molotov Cocktail

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Lucy



by **Rebecca N. McKinnon**

Every day was this:

He woke before his alarm, sweat sticky against the sheets, and started the day tearing them from the sleeper sofa and waddling with his bundle to the laundry room, cursing his self-diagnosed sciatica and hyperhidrosis. He entered the bedroom on the way to the bathroom, to turn his father, who grumbled with both gratitude and annoyance. He made breakfast while wearing only boxers. He turned the laundry. He fed his father. He turned his father.

He replaced the bedsheets. If it was a good day, he emptied the bedpan. If it was a bad day, he continued the laundry and cleaned the crevices of his father's body with a warm towel. He turned the laundry. He turned his father. At lunchtime, if the cycle didn't start over, he grunted with exertion and his father cursed as he rolled him into the chair that would scrape its way down the hall into the TV room, where they watched *Jeopardy!* together. On good days, his father would fall asleep upright during the commercials. On bad days, he would slump to the floor and miss dinner.

Every day was this, until it wasn't:

On that morning, he woke to the sound of crunching metal and squealing tires. A hit-and-run. Dad's old Ford in the driveway. He considered leaving it, but the insurance was current.

Her name was Lucy, the traveling adjuster from Minnesota. She was staying at the Motel 8, the one whose sign had blown away in the last storm. She was working for two companies at once, collision and comprehensive claims. Her days were long and she wanted someone to rub her feet. She said he had strong hands.

After a few weeks, he told her why're you paying that place when you can stay here for free? She didn't mind sweating on the sleeper with him, as long as she was bucking and he was biting the pillowcase under her.

She liked *Jeopardy!* and she talked to his father like he was actually there. She didn't help, but she watched, and she made comments like, you strong man, and, what a big heart. She'd say come here, and he would, no matter what.

She followed the work, she said. She told his father to watch out for him, to go for a drive sometime, to live life, meet a new wife. She said that to his father but was smiling at him.

He called her a lot at first. He only told her he loved her because he couldn't stop thinking about her, he said. That's what love is, right? I can't get you out of my head. She said of course you can't, the life you lead. It was a hurtful thing to say, and he didn't call her for days. Eventually he did but she didn't answer. He didn't know why, but he apologized over voicemail. Lucy, I just wanna hear your voice.

He called again, a day later, and when she picked up he said I love you, I love you, don't hang up. She said you don't love me, you love your father, that's love. Have you been taking care of him? And he hadn't, not as well as he usually had. His silence told her this. Go love somebody who needs it, she says. You were a good fuck. Is that what I have to say to you to get you off? And she meant off the phone, but the conversation continued, her moans coming from states away.

They stayed like this for weeks, until he said he loved her again. It just slipped out, an accident in the ecstasy her voice had brought to his day. It's done, she said. I'm already fucking someone else, and you've complicated this. I'm gonna hang up now before you call me a whore. Lucy, he said to the dial tone. Please, he said to her voicemail. Lucy, please, goddammit, Lucy. I don't care. How am I supposed to go back?



Rebecca N. McKinnon lives in Orlando, Florida, where she's surrounded by library books for a living and writes poems on walks with her golden retriever. Check out her website (RNMcKinnon.com) and her writing streams (twitch.tv/rebeccawrites).