



Maybe I Will Get Lonely

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Lucy opens the door to her home, revealing the pudgy man wearing a gray button-down shirt tucked into blue jeans. The jeans' waist sits underneath the man's protruding belly, and the gray cloth and button strain against the extra flesh. The holes in the thick brown leather fasten around the jeans show signs of distress by the cracks traveling out from each.

The man's thinning brown hair is combed back, making his wrinkled forehead appear larger than it actually is. His brown eyes stare at Lucy over the wide, flat nose. A thick tongue slips out to lick the left corner of his lips.

"Hello, Lucy," the man says with his deep voice.

"Hey, Burt. You look redder than usual."

"I do? Well...I guess it's from the sun."

"Nah, your white skin looks fine to me. I think that redness is from nervousness."

"I can't hide nothin' from you. I am nervous."

"Don't worry about it. Come on in and take a seat."

Burt slips into the house and Lucy closes the door behind him.

"Go take a seat in the recliner. Do you want anything to drink? I got bottled water and some lemonade I didn't make it. I don't think you care about store-bought lemonade but some people do. Oh, I bought a small bottle of vodka for later. If you need some liquid courage I could open it. I find vodka pairs well with store-bought lemonade."

"I'm good. I'm not thirsty."

Burt sits down in the brown cloth recliner but doesn't relax into the chair. He leans forward, resting his arms on his knees.

Lucy walks over to sit on the sofa across from the recliner, her loose, long auburn hair swaying back and forth. She nestles her body into a corner of the sofa and extends her legs across it. Lucy crosses her thin, tanned legs at the ankles and spreads her light blue dress with a flower motif over them. Her toenails display a recent pedicure with its shiny dark red polish.

"You look good, Lucy. I mean, you always look good."

She flashes a toothy smile, and her brown eyes light up from the compliment.

"You look good too, Burt. For a man that loves t-shirts and overalls you clean up well. What's the special occasion?"

"I dressed up to ask you a question."

"That's what you told me on the phone when you asked if you could come over. You wouldn't tell me what the question was over the phone. So what is it?"

"Lucy Smith, will you marry me?"

Her mouth drops open and her body freezes in place for a few seconds. Then she utters "oh."

Burt lowers his head and deflates into the recliner. Lucy turns her head to look at her feet. An uncomfortable silence engulfs the room.

Burt finally breaks the silence's hold with a violent clearing of his throat and jumping to his feet. His work boots make no noise on the carpet.

"I'll be goin' now. You gave me your answer."

Lucy looks up at him, seeing not only the redness spreading but also anger and embarrassment twisting Burt's demeanor.

"Burt, why do you want to marry me?"

"Well...we've been friends for awhile, and we're in our forties, and we're single, and we'd help each other out by gettin' married. That's why."

"I heard nothin' about love in your speech."

"I like you, Lucy. Don't you like me?"

"Marriage is more than liking someone, or even lovin' him or her."

"Then why ask me if I love you?"

"I just wanted to know. To answer your other question I do like you, Burt, but I can't marry you. I probably won't marry anyone. I think I told ya that before."

"I thought you were tryin' to hide the fact no man asked ya to marry him before."

"I did my best to hide the fact that I wasn't interested in marriage."

Burt shakes his head as he retakes his seat in the recliner.

"You're a weird woman, Lucy."

"I know."

"So you gonna stay single forever?"

Lucy shrugs. "Maybe. I like bein' single. But I could change my mind later."

"When later comes it's gonna be too late."

"How so?"

"You'll be fifty before you know it. You're gonna end up in this house all alone. Then you'll probably get a cat or two to keep ya company. That's when you'll regret turning down my offer."

"That's a possibility."

"And you'll think about me and wonder how I'm doin' and if you could get back into my good graces again."

Lucy says nothing but continues to look at her guest. His deep voice turns fierce from the vitriol rising within him and animates his hands he speaks.

"You'll call me up. Yeah, you would do that. You'll have no shame then. Not when you're desperate for companionship. Loneliness will drive you to do that. You'll probably sound so hurt 'cause you'll be in a such a bad position. Those cats won't give you the companionship you desire. And you'll do your best to convince me to take you on. You'll turn on the sweetness or probably cry and plead. Then I'll remind you of my proposal and how you turned me down. Of course I'll do that. I'll gloat then. I'll shut you down like you did me."

"You'll have the same phone number ten years into the future?"

Burt looks at her with anger-tinged confusion.

"My phone number? Is that's all what you took from what I said?"

"Yeah. It's pretty unrealistic to keep your phone number that long. So many things can happen."

"Come on, Lucy! I'm bein' serious here. Don't you understand what your future is gonna look like? How sad it'll be without me or any man there?"

"Burt, you're trying to woo me into marryin' ya, remember? You're doin' a piss-poor job now."

"I'm not gonna be all lovey-dovey. Is that what you're lookin' for? We're too old for that, Lucy. Romance is for young people. Us in our forties need to focus on our older years, for our upcoming reality."

"I started planning for my old age."

"You're plannin' to be alone. I don't get you, Lucy."

"Because you don't know me truly, Burt. I guess you haven't listened to much of what I said over the months. Or you ignored everything I said and built up what you wanted me to be in your mind. Either way you don't know me."

"I care for you, Lucy, I truly do. I don't want you to be unhappy later."

"I get it, I do. But I'm a grown woman and I can handle the consequences of my actions."

"Including turnin' me down?"

"You think that's a mistake, not me. I think I'm making the right choice for you and me."

"You really think marryin' me would be bad for both of us?"

Lucy nods and she uncross her legs, letting one dangle off the side of the sofa. Her light blue dress with the flower motif rides up that leg some.

"How?"

"Burt, I don't love you, and I couldn't grow to love you. I'd probably end up disliking you. I'm beginning to do that now."

"Why? What did I do?"

"You only asked me to marry you 'cause you're lonely. And I know you want a stable place to stay and I own a house. Remember all those complaints you had about rent and your apartment a few months back? You'll solve those two problems by marryin' me. Finally, you want a woman to cook and clean and sex you up. I don't see how I would benefit in a marriage to you."

"I got a good job."

"Yeah, you do. But having a stable job with good benefits ain't enough for me to marry ya."

"This was a waste of my time. I try to do somethin' nice for ya and look how you treat me. I hope you end up all alone. I hope not even a cat wants your company. I hope loneliness eats you up and you die from it."

“Maybe I will get lonely, Burt. Or maybe I won’t. I know one thing, though.”

“What’s that?”

“You won’t be there to see it. Now get out of my house.”