

BODIES

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Press your face into the damp pillow. Breathe in the morning after, the vodka sweat and human odor and gray, reminiscent of waking in a camping tent. Check the clock, one more time. Deep breath. Peel your limbs from the sheets. Hold your dick as you walk to her side of the bed. Step into your bathing suit. Toxins ribbon through your stomach and toward your bowels. Your head feels like fuck. Glance at her body sprawled across the comforter, her eyes closed too tight to really be asleep. Remember how she used to wear sunscreen to school so she wouldn't burn walking between buildings. You are nineteen, home for the summer. Want to say something. Want a shared glass of water. Want to see her sober. Know how that story ends. Walk out the door.

Accelerate away from the

sleeping party with the windows down blinking into the rushing AM to keep your eyes alert because you can't pump the radio because the radio makes the throbbing worse. Break. Open the door. Vomit. Continue to Sam's house.

Sam is a quadriplegic. He can shave and use a fork but doesn't have full function of his arms, so he's technically a quad. He can stand and with a walker, circle his house. Sam was on the wrestling team in college. His sophomore year, an opponent slammed him on his neck.

Sam is twenty-five. At the end of the summer, he's starting a Master's in history. He weighs about one hundred pounds and can grow a beard in three days. He does so to look close to his age.

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Let yourself in with the key hanging on a nail underneath the porch. Walk upstairs. Sidestep the chair lift. Say, "What up." His furry chest is a board against the bed. Laugh (your head thinks bad idea) when he makes fun of you for wearing a bathing suit, for sleeping in your bathing suit and wearing it to work, this incredibly serious job as Personal Care Attendant, helping him get ready each morning. He asks what time you went to bed last night, gesturing at the bags under your eyes, your overcast face.

Say, "Three," because six sounds like a problem.

Ignore the smell of urine, that sharp warmth, as you put on rubber gloves and open a few disinfectant wipes, lift the blankets, remove the catheter tube from the night bag, cap the night bag, disinfect the catheter tube, and secure it into the leg bag. After throwing away the gloves, secure the leg bag's Velcro straps around his calf. Ask about his kayaking trip and nod at his anecdote because speaking hurts almost as much as driving. Take off his socks. Roll the palm of your hand against the arch of each foot. Take your time. Feet are the precious base. Remember when

you were a runner. Flex his ankles, Achilles. Crawl onto the bed. On your knees, facing the length of his body, lift his leg. His hamstrings are like resistance bands. Feel them quiver as you push from under his knee toward his shoulder, loosening muscles so that he will be able to transfer himself from bed to wheelchair. Repeat. And again, three times per leg. Crawl closer to his waist. Keep the conversation going. Make eye contact so it feels natural to place a hand on the inside of each of thigh and push.

After he showers and calls your name, slide black boxer briefs over his feet and up his legs, not just because he is your friend or because you get paid by the state, but because this is beauty, this is waking up with another, this will make you whole.