

Lunch, daily.

by Jeanna Goodrich

Inside jokes, a convertible, cooking, doing the dishes. Support. Security. Arms up, shirt over head. Thinking, suddenly, it's cold. She's cold. But she can learn to like this.

Fresh fruit in brown paper lunch bags. Brown paper lunch bags in the first place. Bra, unsnapped with the passion, precision, and temperature of a metal hand. Cute, but not cute enough to notice.

Time. Somewhere to go. Someone to go with. Dinner, dessert, and an air conditioner set to no lower than 65 degrees. A big-screen television with a paid cable bill and Tivo. Every single season of *The Office*. Laughter. "You can't rape the willing." A comfortable blanket. Lists.

Pants, panties—they're gone, too. She loathes every inch of her body but only when she is in this room. She can't like herself but she can learn to like this.

Mom said, Fake it till you make it. Mom said, Money doesn't buy happiness. Mom said, Don't settle. Her clothes are in a pile on the floor, now, and she's secretly let out a near-violent shiver under the comforter. Maybe the lights won't come on. She's not settling. She can learn to like this.

Smiling.

She can learn to like this; she will.

