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# MOVE OVER, LUCY BY JEWEL BETH DAVIS

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After it was all over, she drove home considering how she would handle the matter next time. She thought of herself as very competent and smart. Always smart. She had several advanced degrees and acknowledged very readily to her friends that she was something of an intellectual snob. And it wasn't that she wasn't good with machines. She had once taken apart an entire telephone before they became computerized and put it back together with no leftover parts. She'd taught herself to use a computer with absolutely no help from anyone. She was tenacious. She stuck with something until she'd learned it inside and out just by trying every choice possible. She was a risk taker. She wasn't afraid to fail. But she had to accept that the carwash had had its way with her.

Actually, she loved car washes. Years ago, she'd had a little sleek shiny black dog named Jeefer Lee. It was no exaggeration to say he was the best dog in the world. None at all. They both loved the car wash and when Jeefer was still alive, she would go with him to the car wash as if to an amusement park and the two of them would be mightily entertained by the experience. The windows were closed, the car was in neutral, and it became a little buggy traveling along the rails just like in the Tunnel of Love. She sat with her arms around Jeefer, moving slowly along as the visual auditory spectacle unfolded. And what a visual feast it was for them. Every car wash used different colored soap. It might be white or blue or pink. Or very rarely, even yellow. The foam and soapsuds would cover the windows and contain the two of them within. In the midst of this storm, they were safe and warm. The brushes and foam cloth mops were everywhere, scrubbing rhythmically back and forth. They reminded her of the scene in Wizard of Oz when Dorothy and her dear friends gained access into the Emerald City and they were put through a people-automated cleaning (Dorothy), brushing (Lion), polishing (Tin Man) and restuffing (Scarecrow) before they could meet with the Great and Terrible Oz. In the carwash, the vacuum water sucking machines would snap onto the front and sides of the car at just the right moment with a whirring whoosh, bringing the car and its inhabitants back to their previous state of being and the feeling of all things being right again. You couldn't beat a car wash for that sense of completion, a kaleidoscope of color, sound and movement.

And they were together, she and Jeefer, in the quiet and safety of their little bubble, watching and drinking it all in with their eyes and ears. She thought it must be like a revisiting of her time in the womb, so happy and self-contained once more. As the car moved steadily along the track, she would laugh and scream in the same way she did on the Ferris wheel as it traveled to the topmost position and Jeefer would join in with little yips interspersed with face licks. It was clear he loved it as much as she did. Once they even went through a second time straightaway. She smiled as she drove down Central Ave. past the fourth Dunkin Donuts in a row, remembering the looks on the faces of the car wash jockeys when she drove into the entrance again, giggling conspiratorially with a tail

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wagging dog. He'd been as pleased as she to ride that sudsy waterway again. It was, at that time, only \$2.50 for the Over/Under. That was her wash of choice, only rarely splurging on The Works at \$5. Even at that, it was a relatively cheap and simultaneously pragmatic form of entertainment. She sighed, realizing that the Over/Under was now \$10 and The Works was \$15. Things change.

She pulled up to the endless stoplight at Oak St. between the Mega-Brooks Drugs and the Mega-CVS directly across the street from each other. Now, that Jeefer was gone, she thought, many years gone, she no longer reveled in the carwash as she used to. She certainly couldn't bring Lizzie her cat to the Car Wash. To Lizzie, it would be a form of torture not to be endured. She could envision Liz with all four of her paws glued to the car windows, like those frightening stuffed animals with suction cups on their paws, shrieking to be set free from this unendurable agony. No, she sighed again, it was not to be considered. How she missed Jeefer, her friend and best confidante.

She thought back to an hour earlier. She'd pulled into a Mr. Mike's on the Dover-Somersworth Road on a chilly late winter day. It was about a week before the official start of spring but the winter wasn't yet ready to let go. She needed gas. For the car and for herself. She needed something. She pushed her credit card into the specified slot and experienced the customary panic when the screen on the pump ordered her to pull the card out quickly before she'd even finished pushing it in as far as it would go. Even the pumps were mean and rude these days. They asked for the impossible. Machines were so pushy. They said please and thank you but they didn't mean it. And there were so many of them. They seemed to have more control over her actions than she did. She didn't mind pumping her own gas because in those very rare stations that were full service, the attendants always overfilled the tank after the pump had clicked off. She hated that. And they never had enough attendants on, so if she were in a hurry, she had to wait and wait while her stomach acid bubbled up.

The heavy pump she held clicked off and she was grateful. Her left hand and arm were cramping. Following the commands barked on the screen, she awkwardly jockeyed the steel aardvark-like nose back into its housing where it never seemed to want to go and waited for her receipt. The screen blatted at her with font fanfare that because she'd filled up, she had received a free car wash at the automatic hands-free mini-carwash behind the convenience store. It sounded like a good thing. It was free and maybe it would pick her spirits up in the late winter gloom. Okay.

Inside Mr. Mike's, the pimply-faced over-gelled cashier grudgingly gave her directions since there was no car wash attendant for this modern wonder. He gave her the sense that no one else had ever needed directions. Fine, she didn't care. She needed them. She barely controlled herself from blurting at the clerk, "Too much product," before she exited out the glass door. She steered her car around the back and pulled into the curved driveway that led into the carwash track. She stopped the car and read the directions.

It said:

1. Feed the ticket into the slot with the arrow next to it.
  2. Make certain your windows are shut tight.
  3. Fold in side view mirrors to avoid damage to them.
  4. Put your car in neutral.
  5. Take your foot off the brake and hands off the wheel. 6. Push button to
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start.

Okay, she thought, I can do this. And she began. First, the ticket. Then, the window check. Car in neutral. Foot off brake. Hands off wheel. Push button. The car began to move in slow motion along the track.

Wait! she shrieked. Wait! Oh shit! I forgot to fold the mirrors in! Oh God, oh my God!

She panicked. She had to get those mirrors folded in. She immediately pushed the button for her front automatic windows to roll down. They did. She launched herself across the bucket seats and frantically grabbed at the passenger side rear view mirror and folded it in, then pushed the button to roll up that window. I've done it. No, she'd only half done it. The one on the driver's side! Oh no. Wa-a-ait!

Just as she reached her arm out the driver's side window, jets of thick pink foamy soap the color and consistency of aerated Pepto Bismol shot into the car like machine gun fire. NO! Her brain shut down. She didn't close the window immediately, she couldn't remember how. She shielded her face, eyes and mouth from the foamy onslaught but couldn't find the handle for rolling up the window again. The handle? No, windows don't have handles anymore, dammit; they have buttons for electric windows. The button, the button, dammit! She screamed repeatedly for it to stop. She slapped at the streams of foam, trying to push them back out the window. Finally, she gave up screaming. It was so crazy, so "Lucy," there was nothing left to do but laugh. At least, she didn't have "a lot of splainin' to do" for any Ricky. That was both good and bad. She gave up all control and just went for the ride, laughing at herself and how unexpected life could be.

By the time she remembered about the window button and then remembered how to use it, the entire front seat of the car was filled with thick bubbly pink foam. It covered everything: the seats, the floors, the dashboard, the mirror, the wheel, and her. Her clothes, her hair, all pink. Everything pink. Pink whipped cream. And not just pink but hyper-pink. Neon pink. Pinked out. And pink had never been her favorite color. She might have to rethink that. And the noise. So loud. Splashing, spraying, scratching, crashing, brushing, and grinding metal sounds. Her world became pink and sound.

The car rolled gently off the track, out of the car wash and came slowly to a stop. She looked around her. Silence was ubiquitous. The wash was done. It was over. She put her car in gear, drove over to the side of the exit lane and stopped. She was suddenly aware of something new; the inside of the car smelled great. Triumphantly, she rolled up the window. She used her hand to rub all the foam into the seats and floor rugs. For months afterwards, the car would smell heavenly. She had a clean car, inside and out. She'd had her spirits lifted. And she'd gotten her mirrors folded in. She felt good. Too bad Jeefer wasn't there with her to enjoy it.

Now, on her drive home, rolling in the perfumed capsule past the many strip malls on Gasoline Alley, she mused about how to handle future forays at the carwash. Hello. She knew exactly what she'd do next time. She'd go to the kind with attendants who took care of pushing your side mirrors in. After all, she didn't have to be good at everything. She could hire people to do some things. And she'd invite Jeefer's ghost along because certain kinds of loneliness benefit from a good imagination.

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**Jewel Davis** is a theater artist who has performed, directed and choreographed professionally throughout the U.S. and British Isles. She holds a BA in Theater from University of NH and an MA in Theater Movement from Wesleyan University in Connecticut. Presently, she is earning an MFA in Writing at Vermont College. She also teaches English, Creative Writing, Creative Non-Fiction, Theater, Communications, Composition, and Literature at NH Community Technical College and Middlesex Community College. She has completed a theater book for educators and counselors entitled *Issues Oriented Theater- a Guide to Encourage Dialogue Amongst Teens*. Her play, *Shadow Dancing*, won an award from the CT Playwright's Collective.

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