

Saved By The Firefighter Chapter 8 - Tips

0 9 minutes read

Lucy's Point of view (Ben)

I sip at the water that is in the plastic cup on the dark wooden cabinet beside my hospital bed, hoping I'm allowed out of this place today. Not that I have a home to go to anymore. A small sob threatens to break free from me, but in all honesty, I am done with tears.

Tears: They will not replace my personal possessions, my childhood memories, the photographs of my parents before the fatal car accident on the A19 that took them from me and my little brother four years ago, or the home I was trying to build for myself. I swallow the lump in my scorched throat and take another sip of water to ease the painful scratchy feeling from the smoke inhalation.

Anger begins to rise in place of the melancholy that was threatening to consume me. I had called my landlord four times about the sound of dripping water in that cupboard, but he had promised me he had visited when I was at work and could not find anything wrong. I doubt if the fly-by-night landlord had even entered the house, especially as the fire investigation unit had called me yesterday, informing me that the reason my home burst into flames whilst I was soaking in a hot bath, was because of a burst water pipe, that was squ!rting a small, but deadly stream of water onto the electric meter.

I have since finding out the cause of the fire, left 25 messages for the landlord to call me back, explaining what had caused the devastation of my home, and his house. So far he is refusing to return my calls. So, the only place I can go, if they let me out of here, is to my brother and his girlfriend's place. The issue with that is, there is no bedroom for me. My niece and nephew have the second room in the two bedroomed, small, terraced cottage in the Monkwearmouth area of Sunderland, and as grateful as I am for having a sofa to sleep on, it is not ideal, given the kids are pre-schoolers and neither of them sleep past 5am.

In all honesty, I don't think my brother's girlfriend Samantha, wants me there. We do not really get on, I tolerate her for my brother, niece and nephew's sake. She had got her claws into Calum whilst they were still in school. He never 'bagged up' during his teenage rebellion, hating the world because both our parents had been so cruelly taken from us, a HGV driver being driving to

long, failed to take a break and fell asleep at the wheel. They never stood a chance. Calum at just 15 years old had loathed the fact he had to live with his older sister who had to play mam and dad, not wanting to take advice from me, whilst still being just 20-years old myself. He went on a one man mission to use and lose every girl he could get his hands on, at the time he thought it was cool.

At 15-years old, one of my brother's conquests fell pregnant with my niece Kirstie. Then a year later with my nephew Daunte. So, now my brother, at the ripe old age of 19-years old, is a father to two kids, working a dead-end job, whilst Samantha plays at being a stay-at-home mam, and seriously does not like his 24-year old sister hanging around, making sure she gets out of bed to watch over the kids she has birthed, when all she wants is to lie in, and not have to deal with two toddlers. Staying with them is only going to upset the status quo, and to say she isn't happy about it is an understatement. To be fair to Calum, despite his young age, he never ran away, he took the responsibility of his actions on the chin, not wanting his own kids to be brought up without a father, he so desperately missed, and he is the best dad any kid could ask for.

Maybe it was time to bite the bullet and move to Newcastle, after all, that is where I work. The 35-minute metro journey that takes probably near an hour or so each day due to delays, is extremely frustrating, but being a Sunderland l.a.s.s through-and-through, moving to the 'dark side' sets my teeth on edge, I am a 'Mackem', and living with a load of 'Geordies' makes me shiver, what can I say, the rivalry between our city's runs deep.

The team of men and women in bright white coats with stethoscopes around their necks, arrive in the small six-bed side ward, stopping at each of the patients, asking questions, looking at charts, and giving them the information, we all want to know. Can we get out of here and cease to eat the NHS hospital food? I was waiting patiently for my turn, wanting out of here, but still not wanting to leave in equal measure.

"This is Lucy Dixon, she has been here for 48-hours due to smoke inhalation, after being rescued by the fire brigade in a house fire." The nurse informed the doctor.

"Lucky girl." The grey-haired older man stated his black glasses on the end of his large wide nose that had a purple tinge to it, indicating the doctor liked more than the odd drink.

People say that to me, but as ungrateful as it sounds, I do not feel lucky at all; I have nothing left, and once more emotions threaten to flood my face with tears, as I am reminded of just what I have lost.

“Well Miss Dixon, good news, your lungs were clear in the last X-ray. You are free to go.” The doctor smiled warmly at me.

I nod my head with thanks, unable to vocalise at the moment, for fear of breaking down into tears again.

“It will take a couple of hours for the discharge papers to come through, so if you can have someone pick you up at mid-day.” The nurse smiles at me, then gives my hand a gentle squeeze, before moving onto the next patient who eagerly awaits their fate.

I grab the phone on the tv stand next to my bed, they charge a fortune to make a call, but I have no mobile, no nothing, and so I have to bite the bullet and ring Calum, hoping he can come pick me up during his lunch break from the bar he works at in the city.

“Calum Dixon.” He answers, his gruff voice so far removed from the boy he once was, the one I was supposed to look after, when Mam and Dad died, yet he is the one looking after me, adding to his own worries.

“Hey Cal, its me. They are letting me out. Any chance you can pick me up on your lunch break please?” I ask, my voice still hoarse from the smoke.

“Hey Lucy locket, yeah, I will come get you.”

“Thank you, I am so sorry about all of this, really Cal, I know it is not ideal, for any of us.” I sigh out.

“It is no problem, and it won’t be for long.”

“Well, see you after mid-day, can you bring me something to wear please? I love you bro.” I sigh, feeling for the umpteenth-time I am letting him down.

“Yeah, okay, got to go, see you soon.” Cal states, before hanging up the phone.

A smile teeters on my lips; my baby brother, still not sure how to voice his affection for his older sister. Sometimes it is easy to forget he is still a teenager himself.

I take another sip of water, then call work. They were informed what happened by Calum, but I need to let them know I have a two-week sick note and will not be signed back to work. It is a bummer. Although the basic wage is okay, I make my main money on commission from the sales working at a magazine publishing house. That money is what will help me recover from the fire, but it has been tough going after Covid. No company really wanted to spend funds on magazine advertising, and I guess I will not hit my target this month, given I am not signed fit for work.

I dial my work number, as Brian the sales director answers.

“Newcastle and Gateshead publishers.”

“Brian, it is Lucy.”

“Lucy, how are you feeling?” he asks, his tone more concerned than I would have expected. He was the typical sales boss; driven only by the numbers on the board, the money I could bring into the company, and the time we spent on making cold calls to the marketing directors of the small business that were chamber members.

“Okay, I am getting out of hospital, but still have a two-week sick note.” I sigh.

“Lucy, it really makes no difference, I’m afraid. We have just come out of a staff meeting; we are closing the business down. I am sorry to add to your troubles, but the whole staff have been let go. We lost our last two chambers to Maxwell Publishing yesterday. We will pay you for the full month, but as you have worked for us for less than two years, you will not get any redundancy pay.”

Numb; that is the best I can describe my feelings as I listen to Brian tell me, not only am I homeless, but I am also unemployed. For someone who talks for a living, I am rendered mute, as another wave of tears begin their journey down my cheeks.

“Lucy, are you still there?” Brian asks.

I clear my throat, my voice croaking more than it had been from the overwhelming emotions that were pulsing through my body.

“Yeah.” Is all I can manage to say without breaking out into more sobs, that will not help my situation, and only cause my scratchy painful throat to become more painful.

“I am sorry. It’s sh!t, I know it is. But Maxwell publishing are taking on staff, I know you are in hospital, but I will send your C.V. over to their CEO myself, with a recommendation. You are one of the only business development managers who consistently hit target. You will find something else; I know you will.” Brian tried to reassure me. Don’t get me wrong, I am grateful for the help, but right at this moment, I just want to curl up on my hospital bed and shut out the world. This news is what is known as the straw that broke the camels back.

“Yeah, thanks Brian.” I manage, before putting down the phone.

I pull the curtains around my bed and do just what I have wanted to do since my home burst into flames and burnt to the ground, I give in, curling up in the foetal position and cry my heart out.

I don’t know how long I’ve laid like this, but a nurse pokes her head around the curtain, then comes and pulls up a chair and sits next to me. She doesn’t speak, just sits, and strokes my back, allowing me to cry out my frustrations.

When finally, the tears subside, she softly smiles at me.

“Sometimes we all need to just have a good cry.” The fifty-something nurse tells me, her voice filled with kindness and compassion.

I nod at her, wiping the tears with the back of my hand.

“I just lost my job.” I croak out, and she lets out a soft sigh.

“It is not your week, pet, is it?”

“Nope” I reply popping the ‘p’.

“Actually, I came to tell you, the firefighter who pulled you out of your house, has rang to ask how you are doing. Ben is his name. I recognised his voice; he was a patient of mine a while ago after being caught in a fire and getting

injured. Lovely guy; heart of gold. I told him you were getting discharged this afternoon, and he asked me to pass his phone number to you, so he can check on you, or if you need anything.” The nurse smiled at me.

I nod at her, then offer a soft smile.

“That was nice of him.” I state.

The memory of his piercing grey eyes comes into focus; it is one of the few things I do remember about that day. His eyes, as he passed me his oxygen mask, and covered my n.akedness from the neighbours. They were swirling from emotion, pain, relief, and they held me captive, and I remember wondering why. Maybe it was because of the reason he had been a patient here, or the fact I was starting to crush on the man who had risked his life to save me. I am sure psychologists would have a diagnosis about the reason I dream of those eyes every night, but my own theory was, it was a nice memory from the disaster that surrounded me, my brain not wanting to relive the horror.

The nurse placed the number on my bedside table, then offered another soft smile before heading off to tend to her other patients, leaving me to my thoughts. I looked at the number, then shook my head. He was just being kind and I really don't need any more pity from a stranger, nor did I need to spend my time fantasising about the man, as a way to escape my reality. I don't have clothes to were, let alone a phone, I need a home, and now a new job, and only I can make that happen. So I crumpled up the paper, determined to forget those haunting beautiful eyes, and the fact the large man had easily thrown me over his shoulder, and threw it into the small plastic bag that served as a bin. Once again let the tears fall down my cheeks, as I gave into the darkness clouding my mind thicker than the smoke had been in my house.