

The Little Spoon: A *Breath* Fan Fiction
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Author's Note: Font changes indicate that a different character is now the narrator. Lucas is this font. **Jon is this one.**

PART THREE

The sun woke me up the next morning. I groaned and turned over, burying my face in Jon's chest.

"Good morning Lucas," he whispered, running his fingers through my hair. "How did you sleep?"

"Okay, I guess."

"Ready to get up?"

I shook my head. "Ask me again in five minutes," I said, squeezing my eyes closed.

"Sure," he said, his hand rubbing my back.

Twenty minutes later we sat at the bottom of the stairs, pulling our boots on for the snow outside.

"So, you're going out for breakfast," Maya said, coming down the stairs in her nightgown and slippers. "Mind if I join you?"

I looked at Jon. He shrugged his indifference.

"Sure. Wanna meet us there? We were about to go."

"Yeah, all right. See you in a few minutes," she said.

The bell over the door tinkled, signaling our arrival at Payne's Coffee House.

"Morning boys!" Siren called from behind the counter. "I'll be with you in a minute."

"Things have been crazy here ever since Bastian stopped showing up," she said, five minutes later, when she came to take our orders.

"Is he still not back then?" Jon asked. "I'll just have some black tea, thanks."

"Yeah. I've tried calling him, but he didn't answer his phone. And I've been too busy to drop by his apartment."

"We could stop by there later today if you want," I said. "And I'll have an espresso and a muffin."

"Got it. Yeah, that would be great. I'll get his address for you."

She left, just as Maya and Sarah stepped through the door.

"Good morning lovebirds!" Sarah said loudly, waving at us.

Jon and I rolled our eyes at each other.

"Good morning Sarah," I said as she sat down across the table from us. "What lies has Maya been feeding you this time?"

She ignored me, and bent forward across the table, studying first my face and then Jon's in minute detail. Apparently satisfied, she grinned and looked up at Maya, who was standing behind her.

"You were right! They do have the glow!"

"What are you talking about?" I asked, warily.

"The 'Morning-After-Sex' glow, you dummy!" She said, excitedly. "Well, come on! Spill! Who did who?"

"Sarah! Don't say stuff like that!" I cried, feeling my face turn bright red. "And no, I don't have a 'glow!'"

"No, she's right Lucas," Maya said, sitting down next to her. "You do have a bit of an aura going on. It's really cute, actually. Don't ruin it for them Sarah. I'm sure they're enjoying it."

Just then, Siren came back with our drinks.

"Hey you two," she said to the girls, "What's up?"

"Hi Siren. We just spotted Lucas and Jon having their morning-after coffee and decided to stop in to hear the details," Sarah said, grinning.

Siren frowned.

"You two know I don't allow pestering of morning-after customers," she said sternly. "Come on, take another table and leave them alone for a bit."

Sarah looked like she was about to protest, but Maya elbowed her, and she closed her mouth.

"Come on Sarah," Maya said, hauling her to her feet. "Siren's right. Let's leave them be."

They left to find another table, and Siren set down our drinks.

"Sorry about that," she said. "If I'd noticed I'd have sat you in one of the booths upstairs where you wouldn't have been bothered."

"It's okay, Siren," I said. "Thanks."

"Forget it. Here's Bastian's address, by the way," she said, handing me a scrap of paper with the address scribbled on it. "Tell him we miss him, and that if there's anything we can do to help, we will."

"Sure," I said, taking the slip from her. "We'll let him know."

"Hey, I'm sorry about earlier," Lucas said as we boarded the bus for Bastian's neighborhood. "Sarah's been extra annoying recently. I hope Maya and Jess can straighten her out."

"It's all right," I said, "I mean, it's not like either of us regrets it, right? It's just a little embarrassing to have people make a big deal out of it."

"Yeah..."

I looked out the window, watching the streets go by.

"Where does Bastian live, anyway?" I asked, "I always thought he lived close by."

"Yeah, so did I," he said, looking at the address. "But it looks like he actually lives down by the river, in one of those tenements."

Twenty minutes later we got off the bus in one of the poorest parts of town. There was trash in the street, and the air smelled of the river. Bastian's apartment building was another five minutes walk from the bus stop, next to the monorail that connected the center of town with the suburbs across the river. The building itself was old, a plain brick tower that stood ten stories high. Many of the windows were broken, and the only sign that the building was even inhabited was the newly installed fire escape that covered the front face of the building.

"That's where Bastian lives?" I asked.

"It's the right address, he said, looking at the paper again. "Yeah, this is it. The Dublin Street Apartments." He looked up. "Bastian lives on the top floor."

Inside the apartment building it was barely warmer than it was outside. I could see my breath whenever we passed one of the dim bulbs that illuminated the stairs. The air in the building was damp and clammy, and smelled slightly of cabbage. The top floor was dingy and dark, many of its bulbs long burnt out. Bastian's apartment was near the end of the hall, around the back of the building.

"Well, I guess we just knock," I said, after staring at the door for a minute.

Lucas nodded and rapped gently on the door.

"Bastian? Are you in there? It's me, Lucas. Can I come in?"

We waited a moment, but there was no reply from inside.

He knocked again, louder this time.

"Bastian? Are you home?"

"He's home," I said. "I can see light under the door."

Lucas nodded and rapped one more time on the door.

"Bastian, we're going to come in, okay?" He said, turning the handle and opening the door.

Inside was a narrow one-room apartment, with a bed at one end next to a battered dresser. Bastian was curled up in the fetal position on the bed, which looked more like a board with sheets on it than something for sleeping on.

"Bastian?" Lucas said softly, advancing across the room. "Bastian, are you all right?"

He uncurled a bit and looked up at us, his eyes bleary. For the first time, I realized just how small he was. He looked undernourished and pale in the light from the bare bulb on the ceiling.

"Hey," he said, looking away. "What's up?"

Lucas sat down next to him on the bed.

"Siren's worried about you. She asked us to come check and make sure you were okay."

He sighed.

"I'll be fine. I'm just... Not feeling very well."

"Bastian, we've barely seen you all month," I said. "If you've really been sick this whole time why didn't you go to the doctor?"

"I can't afford it," He said, sitting up. "Besides, I'm not really sick."

I sat down on his other side.

"You're not sick?" I asked.

"Not really," He said, hanging his head. "I just... something happened, and I don't know what to do."

"What happened?" Luc asked.

"I-I don't want to talk about it," he said, shivering. "It's just... I don't know if I can go back to Payne's now. I think I have to quit, and I don't want to, but I really don't think I can go back."

I looked at Lucas over his head and raised an eyebrow.

"Is this something about Siren?" I asked.

"No, it has nothing to do with her."

"Then would you be willing to meet her somewhere else and talk about whatever went wrong? She's really worried, even though she won't say so."

He sighed. "I guess."

"We could meet her at her place tonight, if you're not working..." I started to suggest, but he cut me off.

"No! Not there, I can't..."

"Okay! Okay! Relax, you don't have to. Why don't you meet her at our place instead?" Lucas said. "You can even crash with us for the night if you want. At least it's warmer than here."

He shook his head.

"I just can't do it tonight. I've got school work that I have to do, and I'm not very good math, so it takes me forever..."

Luc looked at me over Bastian's head again, his face questioning. I nodded.

"Look, Bastian, if you'll come over and talk with Siren I'll help you with your homework. I know it's hard but I've been there, and trust me, you'll feel better."

He sighed again.

"You guys aren't going to let it go, are you?" He asked.

"No, we're not, because we're your friends," Luc said, putting a hand on his shoulder. "We don't want to see your life fall apart if we can do something to stop it from happening."

"I guess I'll go then," He said, getting up. "If you wait outside, I'll be out in a minute or two."

"Sure. Take all the time you need." Luc said. "We'll be waiting."

We stepped outside.

"He can't keep living there," Luc said, once the door was shut. "It's not healthy! It must be fifty degrees in there!"

"No bathroom either," I said, "and no food. He must have to eat out three meals a day."

"If he gets that many. He's so thin..."

"I'd offer him my old apartment, but the lease just expired, so..."

"He can stay with us for a while, if you don't mind sharing your room with me. He can have my room for the time being..."

We stopped talking as Bastian emerged and locked the door behind him.

"Okay, I'm ready, I guess," he said, hefting a duffle bag over his shoulder.

"Come on then. We'll take the bus."

"So why do you live in a place like that?" Lucas asked on the bus ride back to his neighborhood.

"It's all I can afford."

"That can't be right. Doesn't Payne's pay really well?"

He nodded.

"Yeah, they do. But I don't keep much of it."

"Where does it all go then?"

He sighed.

"A few years ago, I was living in the next town over with my mom and dad. Then, a couple weeks after my fifteenth birthday, they went out to dinner for their anniversary. On the way back from the restaurant, a drunk driver ran a red light and hit their car."

"Oh wow, I'm sorry! I didn't know..."

"It's okay. Anyway, he was killed instantly, and so was my dad. They took mom to the hospital, but she's paraplegic now."

"So now you work to support your mom?"

He shook his head.

"Maybe in a few years I'll be working for that. Right now, I'm still working to pay the hospital bill."

"Who's taking care of your mom while you're here?" I asked.

"My grandma looks after her. She's too old to work, but she can help my mom do most of the things she can't do. Mom's getting a lot stronger too, so she's starting to look for a job again. But with the economy all messed up, she's having a hard time."

"What did your parents do, anyway?" Luc asked.

"They owned a coffee shop. They were both baristas at this place for years, and when the old owner died, he left it to them, since he didn't have any family. Mom had to sell it after the accident, though, to try and pay for her surgeries. I think it's a Starbucks now."

"So that's where you learned to make such good coffee."

"Y-yeah." He said, wiping his eyes on his sleeve.

"I'm sorry Bastian," Luc said, giving him a hug. "We didn't mean to make you so upset."

"No, it's okay."

"Maya! We're having guests for dinner!" I called as I stomped the snow from my boots by our front door.

"Who's coming?" She called back from the kitchen.

"Bastian and Siren," I said, beckoning the others to follow me.

"Bastian's coming?" She said, skeptically.

"Actually, he's already here," I replied, leading him into the kitchen.

Maya threw up her hands in excitement and dived across the kitchen to give Bastian a hug.

"Bastian! Where have you been? We've all been so worried!" She stepped back to take a look at him. "You're so *thin*! Haven't you been eating, sweetie? And getting enough sleep?"

"Well," he said, smiling thinly, "I *did* miss lunch..."

Maya gasped in horror.

"Sit down this minute young man! I'm going to make you a sandwich!" She commanded.

"Okay," he smiled a little wider. "Is it all right if I take my bag upstairs first?"

"Sure. But come right back down afterwards."

"I'll bring him back, don't worry," I said, laughing as I followed him out of the kitchen.

"You'd better. If I have to come up there..."

I laughed. "I promise not to molest him. Come on Bastian, you'll be up in my room..."

He looked around my room with interest.

"Wow, you're...quite a fan of Star Trek, aren't you?"

"Yeah. Since I was a kid," I said, chuckling.

He sat down on the bed, and spotted Jon's photo on my desk.

"Hey, can I ask you something?" He said, picking it up.

"Sure, go ahead," I said, sitting down next to him.

"What's it like?"

"What's what like?"

"Being in love." He said, looking down at the photograph. "What's it feel like?"

I took a deep breath, thinking hard about what to say.

"It's scary." I said, finally.

"Scary?"

"Yeah. It's like, everything; your happiness, your worth, your perception of yourself; they all depend on one person. You're not in control anymore, they are, and you just have to trust that they'll do the right thing. And, if you're lucky, they feel the same way about you. I can't really think of a better way to explain it than that."

"So Jon..."

"Yeah, I feel that way about him." I craned my head around so I could see his face.

"Why are you asking?"

"I... I just wanted to know. I've never really been close to anyone but my parents. But I see you and Jon, and all the other couples who come through Payne's, and I ask myself 'what am I missing?'"

I put a hand on his shoulder.

"Bastian, I don't know what to tell you. Just... don't give up on love yet. Jon was a recluse who spent all his time with computers and math textbooks, and it still found him. I have faith."

"Yeah, I guess I just have to wait..."

"Speaking of waiting, we should get back downstairs. Maya's probably trying to convince Jon that we've been making out this whole time, and I don't intend to let her poison his mind."

"So, you take the square root of that number, and if it's a positive number, that means that the parabola intersects the X-axis at two points; if it equals zero, that means it touches the X-axis but doesn't cross it; and if it's less than zero, it doesn't intersect the X-axis at all."

I looked up from Bastian's math textbook.

"See, the rules are pretty simple. And honestly, the math tends to be pretty easy too. The *hard* part actually *applying* it to a situation where you have a bunch of random facts and numbers; where you aren't told what *a* and *b* and *c* are..."

He frowned, and pulled his pad of graph paper toward him. Every so often he would glance at the textbook, or pause to punch something into his calculator. Finally, after about five minutes, he turned the sheet of paper around and pushed it toward me tentatively.

"So, like this?"

I looked over his graph and equations, and nodded.

"Yeah, it looks good. Does having the calculator help?"

"Yeah, a lot," he said, "It's like... all of a sudden I can do math."

I smiled.

"Yeah, I remember what it was like to try and do this without a calculator. It's possible, but it's so hard that you want to give up by the second problem."

"Ugh! You two are such geeks."

We both turned around to see Siren standing in the kitchen doorway.

“Hey Siren,” Bastian said, getting up.

“Hey to you too,” she said, giving him a hug. “What’s been going on, kiddo?”

“That’s what I wanted to talk about, but...”he looked at me.

I smiled.

“I’ll be upstairs. Have a good chat you two,” I said, getting to my feet.

END PART THREE