

The Little Spoon: A *Breath* Fan Fiction
By: TandlerovMusic
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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 1

Jon walked me home that night. I think he knew I didn't want to go alone. We walked in silence most of the way. I guess he knew I didn't want to talk about her. At my front door, he turned to me and gave me a hug.

"Hey, try and get some sleep," he said. "I'll see you at Payne's for breakfast."

"I'll try," I whispered, my voice a little scratchy in my throat.

We separated, and I stood in front of the door, looking down at my feet, hugging myself with my arms.

"Hey Lucas?" He said, reaching around to scratch the back of his neck, "um, if you're still scared of the nightmares, I guess I could come in and sit up with you until you fall asleep. At least, if you think it would help..."

I looked up, startled. It wasn't like him to be this... concerned.

Wow, I must really have him worried.

"Uh, yeah," I said, cracking a little smile, "I'd like that."

It must have been around 1:30 when Lucas finally fell asleep. I waited a few minutes to be sure, then silently got up and tiptoed out.

I would have left right away, but Maya was waiting for me at the bottom of the stairs.

"So, did you two have fun?" She asked, winking at me.

"Uh, not really," I said, looking away. "I was gonna teach him how to swim, you know, after the whole pool fiasco last week, but..."

"Yeah, I guess he told you about the whole Diana incident."

"Only that she was the reason he doesn't swim anymore. Who was she, exactly?" She sighed.

"It's a long story, and I'm not sure it's mine to tell. Lucas would tell you if you asked him. At least, I think he would."

It was my turn to sigh now.

"Well, I guess I can try and ask him tomorrow. We're having breakfast at Payne's...."

It was raining when I woke up, the kind of heavy rain that makes you wet no matter how well you many raincoats you put on or umbrellas you put up. I sat in bed for a few minutes, running last night through my head.

Right, we're having coffee at Payne's this morning. Guess I should head over there.

Ten minutes later, I stepped into the coffee shop, and spotted Jon in our usual corner booth. I ordered my coffee and went to join him, sliding right up against him on the bench.

"Did you sleep all right?" He asked, sipping his tea.

"Yeah. Thanks for staying up with me. I haven't slept that well in a while."

He took a moment to process that, and then looked up at me.

"Lucas, who was Diana? I asked Maya last night, but she said that it would be better if I heard it from you."

I choked a little on my coffee, burning my tongue. After a few moments of coughing, I looked back at him. His face was serious, and for once, his eyes didn't look away. I sighed and looked down at my lap.

"Diana was someone I dated for a long time when I lived in LA. The doctors always said that she was sick, but I didn't believe them. I just thought it was how she was.

"I tried to do everything for her. I put everything else on hold, and I tried so hard, but it still didn't work."

I looked back up at Jon's face, but I couldn't meet his eyes.

"She... She killed herself. She went out to the end of the pier one day, and she just threw herself off it." I was crying a little now. "I couldn't believe it, but it happened right in front of me. I tried to save her, but I almost drowned, and, and..."

I broke down and cried, right there in the coffee shop. Jon set his tea down and hugged me while I cried into his shoulder.

"Hey, Luc, it's all right. I'm not gonna go anywhere." He said, softly. "I didn't realize what I was asking about. I'm sorry it made you upset."

I looked up at him, my eyes still a little blurry.

"Thanks Jon. I'm sorry I got all worked up about it. It's just still really hard to talk about."

"Don't worry about it." He looked down at where my tears had left a wet spot on his shirt. "Why is it that every time I come in here I get my shirt wet?"

I smiled. "It's a conspiracy," I whispered in his ear. "Probably orchestrated by the KGB."

We both laughed at that, Jon almost spilling his tea down his front again.

It was two days later. I'd gotten the afternoon off work, so I was in my apartment working on a new hard drive for my computer.

There was a knock on the door and Jess came in, without warning as usual.

"Hey Jon. How was your date with Lucas this weekend?"

I sighed and sat back in my chair.

"I don't know. It, uh, was really strange, actually."

"How so?" She asked, flinging herself down on my bed.

"Well, I took him to the adventure bath, but it turned out to be a really terrible idea."

"Why? What, is he hydrophobic or something?"

"No, he's not hydrophobic. But he was acting really weird, and when we talked about it the next morning, he told me he doesn't like deep water because his last girlfriend drowned herself."

She winced. "Ouch, yeah that was probably a bad idea. Still, he can't blame you for not knowing, can he?"

I put down my soldering iron and stood up to stretch.

"I guess not."

"Have you told him about *your* past yet?" She asked.

I hung my head.

"No."

"Jon! You should tell him! He's got a right to know!"

I groaned. "Do I have to?"

"Yes! Pick up that phone, Mr. Shepard. You've got a boyfriend to call!"

"Hey, Lucas?"

"Yeah Jon?"

"Um, I was wondering if you could come by for dinner tonight. I've, um, got something I want to tell you."

"Sure! I'll be there soon."

"Okay, see you then."

"Right. Love you!"

Click

"He's coming in a few minutes," I said to Jess. "You planning on being here for moral support?"

"If you want me to be."

"Thanks."

"Jon, relax. You *know* that as soon as Lucas knows about everything he's going to be all 'Oh Jon, let's snog until you forget about everything.'"

I felt my face get hot.

"Jess! Don't say things like that!"

She laughed, then became more serious.

"Don't you want him to kiss you?"

"No! Yes! I mean... I don't want him to think that I'm not strong enough to deal with it myself!"

"Jon, you know he might see it that way at first, just because of *his* past. You'll just have to let him know that you don't want pity; just a friend who knows what's up."

"Yeah..."

I was silent for a bit, thinking.

"Jess?"

"Yeah?"

"Do you think I should show him the scars?"

"He already knows about them, you dummy. I'm sure he saw them when you were in the hospital."

"Oh, yeah..."

The doorbell rang.

"Oh shit! He's here!"

"Calm down. Just go answer the door."

A minute later we were all sitting in my living room, Lucas and I facing Jess across the coffee table.

"So, um, I wanted to tell you something," I stammered. *Damn it! Pull yourself together Jon*, I thought.

"Yeah, I know. What is it?"

"Um, uh... Geez, I don't know how to start!"

He put his arm around my shoulders and pulled himself against me. "Jon, it's okay. I promise not to freak out. Just tell me."

"Um," I looked at Jess for help, but she just gave me her 'I'm not helping you out of this one' look.

"Okay. Right. So, Lucas, um, did you ever wonder how I got all the, you know, all the scars?"

His eyes widened a bit, and he nodded.

"Yeah, I do wonder."

I sighed and closed my eyes.

"They're from my parents."

I couldn't believe him at first. How could his *parents* have done this to him?

"How could they do that to you?"

"They... they didn't want me. I was a mistake, but my mother wouldn't get an abortion because she thought that it was a sin. But they were too poor to support a family, so things were hard. And they ended up taking out their frustration with each other on me."

"Oh my God! So, all those scars..."

"Yeah. Whenever I was too happy, or too noisy, or didn't do something right, my dad would take me out back and beat me with whatever he could lay his hands on. But my mom was worse. She was the one who cut up my arms." His voice wavered even more, and he winced, probably at the memory.

"Oh God, I still remember that day. All I did was come in with muddy shoes. Oh Christ, Lucas, I was so *scared!*" He paused for a moment to collect himself, then went on.

"When I was nine, Jess gave me a stuffed dolphin for my birthday. It was beautiful, the first toy anyone had ever given me. I was so happy. But I guess they thought I was too happy. Dad beat me until my collarbone broke, and they burned it right in front of me. I think that's when I decided I had to get away. So I got a job as soon as I could, and studied like crazy, and eventually I got a scholarship to come over here to go to school. By then I had enough saved up to buy my plane tickets and rent an apartment, so I just left. I haven't heard from them since."

He sat back and looked up at the ceiling. "That's how I've been able to take all that Trevor and his shit-head friends throw at me. None of it hurts as much as what my parents used to do. At least, nothing hurt that bad until Trevor told me you were just playing a trick on me. God, nothing's hurt me that much in years."

He finally looked back at me.

"Lucas, I'm... sorry I didn't tell you sooner. When you gave me the dolphin, I thought that maybe Jess had told you, but it was just dumb luck."

"So, it wasn't the wrong thing to do?" I asked.

"No, Lucas, it was perfect. I... I wasn't sure you really meant it until you gave it to me. I just hope that you don't think it's too weird. Me having all the scars, I mean."

"What? No, I don't think it's weird."

"Really? They don't freak you out? So, you don't mind if I don't keep them all wrapped up all the time?"

"No, I don't mind."

"Good, because I hate how the wraps make my arms look all white and puny."

I laughed nervously, not knowing what to say next.

"Ugh! You two are so hopeless. Jon, just snog him already!"

"Jess!" Jon yelled, his face turning bright red, "Don't say things like that!"

"Oh come on! You know you want to!"

"Well, maybe I do! But not until you leave!"

"Humph! Fine! But you better thank me tomorrow!"

She left.

I turned back to Lucas, who was looking at me a little strangely.

"Sorry about Jess. She's just like that sometimes..."

I trailed off as he placed his hand flat on my chest and leaned closer.

"So, did you mean it? What you said to Jess?"

"Um... Uh... Yeah, I guess so..."

He chuckled a little bit

"Then why don't you?"

"Do you want me to?"

"Jon, just shut up and kiss me already."

I blinked, and bent down to kiss him, pushing him back until I lay on top of him, our mouths locked together. I felt his hands run through my hair, the right one finding my ear and caressing its curve gently. He always does that, and the way it feels always makes my stomach flutter and my legs feel like Jello.

Eventually we both had to come up for air, both panting and flushed of face.

"Jon... Wow," he breathed, smiling up at me. "That was *amazing*!"

"Sh-shut up!" I stammered, blushing. "I'm not *that* good!"

"Well, I think you are," he said, grinning up at me. "Do you feel better?"

"Yeah, a lot better. Thanks Lucas."

"Um... Do you want to keep going?"

"Uh, not right now. I'm actually kinda hungry. Maybe after...?"

"Sure."

A minute later, I was seated in my tiny breakfast nook while Lucas bustled around the kitchen making some soup.

"You know," he said, "if you ate better, you'd probably feel happier."

"Yeah, I guess. I just don't have time most nights."

"Well, you could always stop by my place. Maya always makes too much for dinner anyway..."

"Maybe I will."

"Mmm."

He set the pot on the stove and switched it on, then turned to face me, leaning on the counter.

"Why're you still wearing those bandages? You said yourself you don't want to."

I shrugged.

"It's just easier. I'm always forgetting to put them back on if I take them off."

He stirred the soup absently, keeping his gaze on me.

"Maybe your subconscious is trying to tell you that you don't need them anymore," he suggested.

"But what if people see..."

"Then they see them. Jon, you're not the only one in the world with scars there. Most of them aren't even from you!"

"I know! I know! It's just, ugh..." I threw up my hands, not knowing how to say what I wanted to say.

Lucas sighed and turned back to the soup, tasting it gingerly before turning off the burner.

"Here, dinner's ready. Where are your bowls?"

"Cupboard over the sink."

"Thanks."

He poured us both big bowls of soup, and then carried them over to me at the table.

"Here."

"Thanks."

I sipped a bit out of my spoon.

"Bay leaf?"

"Yeah, I put one in."

"It tastes good."

"Thanks."

I took another spoonful, and savored the taste.

"Oh wow! It's been a long time since I had something this good."

He smiled over the top of his bowl, obviously pleased that I liked it.

"It's my sister's recipe. She makes it whenever she brings a new boyfriend home for dinner."

"So... am I your boyfriend now?"

"I'd like to think so. I mean, I would say we qualify after, you know, earlier."

I thought about it for a minute. "Yeah, I guess I think so too. Man, I've never had a boyfriend before. I never thought it would be this...good."

He smiled up at me. "Me neither. Think about what all those guys out there are missing."

I picked up my bowl and poured the last of the still-warm soup into my mouth. Suddenly I was really tired, now that I'd eaten a hot meal. I yawned hugely, the kind of yawn where your cheeks hurt and your eyes water.

"Tired?" He asked.

"Yeah. It's been a long day."

"Bedtime?"

"Bedtime."

I was a little surprised when he followed me into my room, but it didn't really bother me.

"Wanna help me undo these bandages?" I asked, gesturing at my arms, "My fingers are kinda tired."

"Sure," he said, softly. "Here, just sit down and I'll do it."

"Thanks."

I sat down on the edge of the bed and pulled off my shirt so he could get at the knots.

"Hey, um, do you want to stay here tonight? I know it's kind of late, and it's cold out and everything..."

"Sure, I'd like that," he said, starting to unwrap my left arm.

"Thanks. I wouldn't ask, but... Sometimes when I talk about my past I get these awful nightmares..."

"It's okay Jon. I'd love to stay."

He finished with my left arm and started on my right.

"You know," he said, as his hands moved gently over my abused skin, "we never finished from earlier..."

"No, I guess we didn't..." I sighed. "Can we do it tomorrow? I'm really tired."

"Sure," he said, letting the last of the bandage slide off my wrist. "It's not like I'm going anywhere..."

He stood and turned around, starting to unbutton his shirt. I yawned and lay back on the pillow, listening to the rain drumming on the window above my head. I heard rather than saw him take off his shirt, and was just drifting off when I heard the soft 'clink' of his belt buckle.

"Um, Lucas? What're you doing?" I asked, sitting up.

He looked up at me, pulling his belt out of the loops on his jeans.

"Uh, taking off my pants. They're not exactly comfortable for sleeping in..."

"Oh, uh... Okay."

"Are you gonna sleep in yours? I promise I won't try anything funny if you don't want to."

"No, no. It's fine. I actually don't generally wear anything when I sleep..."

"Oh, um, neither do I, actually," he said, looking down at his feet and rubbing the back of his neck. "Maybe we should, uh... just get it over with now? You know, so it's not awkward later?"

"Uh, all right..." *It's not like he hasn't seen me naked before...*

I stood up and shoved both my pants and my shorts down, stepping out of them and kicking them into the corner by my dresser. Sitting back down on the bed again, I look up at him, expectantly.

"Well, it's your turn."

His face turned bright red and he hastily unbuttoned his jeans. A second or two later they lay in a pile at his feet, and he kicked them away.

"I look okay?" He asked, smiling nervously.

"Sure, whatever. Come on, I'm exhausted."

He flashed me a nervous smile and sat down next to me, lifting the sheets up over him.

"Now, let's just get some sleep, okay?"

"Yeah. Okay. Um, Jon?"

"What?"

"I know it's probably really weird to ask but... would you hold me close?"

"If you'll let me sleep."

"I will."

"Come here then," I said, lifting my arm so he could get close. He scooted over, and I brought my arm down over him, pulling him even closer.

"This good?" I asked.

"Mhm. Yeah. Thanks Jon. Goodnight."

It was nice to wake up really warm for once. Nice to wake up to Jon's hot breath in my ear too. He was still fast asleep, his strong arms wrapped tightly around my body, our legs tangled together under the sheets.

I looked over at the big digital clock over Jon's computer. 6:30: Still a couple of hours until we had to be at uni. I decided that I wasn't quite ready to get up yet, so I closed my eyes again and lost myself in the warmth from his body.

I woke up again around 8:00 to the sound of Jon's alarm going off. I groaned and squeezed my eyes shut, trying to go back to sleep.

"Wake up Lucas. We've gotta go," Jon whispered in my ear, his lips tickling me.

"Mhm. Just five more minutes."

"No. Come on, we've gotta get ready," he said, sitting up. "C'mon, you don't want to be late."

"Aww, can't we just lie here all day?"

"No. We've gotta go. Come on," he rolled his eyes at me. "If I kiss you, will you get up?"

"Yes!"

I beamed up at him as he bent down and let his lips lightly brush against mine. But he didn't linger for very long.

"Come on. We've gotta get ready now. I promise we can do this again sometime, but I really can't afford to be late."

I sighed and sat up, rubbing the sleep from my eyes.

"Okay, I'm up. What's the rush?"

"If I get to school early enough I don't have to listen to everyone whispering about me in the halls. It's a lot easier to ignore the rumors if I don't have to listen to them." He said, bending down to pick his bandages off the floor. "Will you help me with these again?"

I frowned.

"I thought you hated wearing those. Why do you even bother?"

He sighed. "I don't know. It's just easier this way."

I reached over and took them from his hands. They felt greasy, and the fabric was stained in places.

"Jon, these are gross! You can't wear these!"

He snatched them back

"Why not? No one cares if they're a little dirty!"

"Jon, I care! Come on, you can just throw them in the wash today and just wear long sleeves. No one'll know that you're not wearing them."

He sighed.

"You're not going to let me wear them, are you?"

"No. Just try it without them today and see how you feel."

"Okay. Come on, let's just get dressed then."

Ten minutes later we were standing on the curb waiting for the bus. Jon was shifting around nervously from foot to foot, rubbing his forearms through his shirt.

"Man, this feels weird. I haven't gone outside without the wraps since I was a little kid."

I reached out and put a hand on his shoulder.

"Listen, if you're *really* that uncomfortable with it, we can go back up and put them on. I just wanted to help you get over that part of your past, and I thought this would be a good way to do it. You don't have to if you don't want to."

He smiled a bit.

"No, it's okay. I want to. It's just strange the first time, I guess." He gave a little laugh. "You know, Jess has been trying to get me to stop wearing those things for years, and you managed it in a couple of months. She's going to be so pissed when she finds out."

I groaned. "Oh man, I hope she's not actually pissed. You know she threatened to castrate me if I hurt you? She's scary."

That got a laugh from him.

"Yeah, Jess is kinda like my over-protective big sister. And she *is* pretty scary if you don't know her very well."

Just then the bus came, and we got on.

"Hey, I've been meaning to ask: Has Trevor given you any trouble since you were in the hospital?"

Jon shook his head.

"No, I think he was worried that I'd tell everyone that he was the one who convinced me to cut myself. At least, he hasn't been *actively* trying to torment me since then. Anyway, he'll be in big enough trouble soon. I wiped all those papers I wrote for him from the school server. It's actually what I was doing when you cornered me there."

"Oh. That's good. So, he doesn't try to beat you up in General Fitness anymore?"

"You saw that?"

"Yeah, Sarah and I were kinda stalking you that morning. I'm sorry she hit you, by the way. I should have told her what was up."

"Don't worry about it. She's not so bad now that she's stopped worrying about what all the other airheads think of her."

"Yeah..."

"What's your day look like?" He asked as we walked through the campus gates.

"Well, I'm working in the server room until lunch, but then I've got East Asian History and Abstract Algebra afterwards. Then home for dinner and off to work."

His face fell.

"Oh, I was kind of hoping we'd get to hang out sometime..."

"Yeah, I know. It's just a full day. Look, we can still go to Payne's or something when I get off, right? They're open late during the week..."

"Yeah."

He stopped walking, and grabbed my arm.

"Hey, I've gotta go to class. Will I see you at lunch?"

"Um, yeah. I'll be there."

"Cool."

He looked up and down the sidewalk, then leaned in and gave me a quick kiss.

"Love you Jon. I'll see you later."

He turned and hurried off to his first class. I stood there and watched him go, feeling the sudden heat in my face and the fluttering in my stomach that his words had left.

"I love you too," I whispered under my breath.

Lunch couldn't come fast enough for me. I fidgeted my way through French 301 and History of Non-Western Music and stammered my way through a presentation in Literature of the 19th Century, before bolting for the cafeteria.

Jon was there, as promised, leaning against the wall next to the door. He waved to me as I came in, and I hurried over to him.

"Hey," he said, looking around. "Where do you want to sit?"

I looked around and spotted Jess and Sarah bickering at a table over by the windows.

"Let's go over there," I said, waving in their direction. "I'm sure Jess and Sarah want to interrogate us about last night."

We got our food and walked over.

"Hey, it's our two favorite loverboys!" Jess said, smiling at us as we approached their table. "How'd things go after I left last night?"

Jon and I looked at each other, and then back at them.

"We called Carl over and had a wild threesome on the floor of Jon's apartment," I said, my face deadpan neutral.

"Yeah, it was pretty good, we're sorry you missed out," Jon put in, raising an eyebrow at me. "Especially when Lucas here put his—"

"Shhh! Jon! We promised Carl we wouldn't tell anyone!"

"Oh, right. Forget we said anything."

There was a moment of silence, and then all four of us burst out laughing. People at the surrounding tables looked up at us as Jon and I sat down.

"So, what *really* happened last night?" Sarah asked, turning her KGB-Investigator face on me.

"Not much really. We had dinner and I slept over at Jon's place."

Her eyes narrowed.

"On his sofa or in his bed?"

"Sarah!"

"Come on Lucas."

"In his bed."

"Hah! I knew it! So what happened?"

"Nothing! We just slept!"

"Who was the inside spoon?"

"What?"

"Who was the inside spoon, Lucas?"

"Why does it matter? I mean..."

"LUCAS FARRELL! TELL ME WHICH ONE OF YOU WAS THE INSIDE SPOON!"

I cringed and looked around. People at the nearby tables were still staring at us.

"Um... I was."

She punched the air.

"HAH! I thought so! Pay up Jess, I was right!"

Jess scowled at me and grudgingly pulled out her wallet.

"You were BETTING on us?" I asked.

"Yeah! Jess was so sure that you'd spent all night holding our friend Mr. Shepard while he cried to you about his miserable childhood that she didn't think twice about it. Of course, I know that your dearest wish is that Jon would hold you down on the bed and fu—"

"SARAH!"

She waved a hand at me dismissively.

"I know I'm right. You're just in denial."

Both Jon and I endured interrogation for the rest of lunch, and then split up again to go to our afternoon classes. Sarah had PE with me, so we walked together to the gymnasium.

"So, what was it like sleeping with another guy?"

"Warm," I said. "He was really warm."

Sarah rolled her eyes at me.

"Was it awkward, when you asked him if you could sleep with him?"

"Uh..." I looked down, rubbing the back of my neck. "Kinda. I mean, I was just gonna sleep in my shorts, but then I guess we were talking about it, and I mentioned that I don't normally wear anything in bed and he said 'well, neither do I...'"

"So you..."

"Yeah."

"YOU LET JON SPOON YOU WITHOUT ANY CLOTHES ON?!?" She exclaimed loudly.

"Sarah!"

She clapped her hands over her mouth and looked at me in horror. There were people all around us, and they had all stopped talking.

"OhmyGod! Lucas! I'm sorry."

I groaned at her.

"Well, it's too late for that now, isn't it. Come on; let's just get to class. At least I don't actually have to do anything in Fitness today..."

"Right, now I'll expect that paper on the Sino-Japanese War no later than midnight on Thursday. See you on Friday."

I got up and slung my bag over my shoulder, already thinking about what I'd need for my next class. But, as I stepped out into the hall, three tall girls accosted me, blocking my way.

"We heard you banged Lucas Farrell."

I gaped at them, completely poleaxed.

"What?"

"Yeah, Miranda told us she overheard Sarah and Lucas talking about it. So how'd you do it? Put roofies in his drink?"

I clenched my fists in anger.

"You don't know what you're talking about," I growled. "Just leave me alone."

I made to push past them, but they pushed me back.

"Why'd you do it, Shepard?" One of them asked. **"To spite us?"**

"Because he asked me to." I said, softly.

"What was that, Shephard?"

"BECAUSE HE FUCKING ASKED ME TO!!!" I shouted, shaking with rage. **"WE DIDN'T EVEN DO ANYTHING! WE JUST SLEPT! NOW LEAVE ME ALONE!"**

I pushed past them, knocking one of them over, and ran towards the doors. Outside, I sprinted across the quad to the library and down the little-used stairs that led to the server archive. Once inside, I locked the door behind me and leaned against it, breathing hard. I let myself sink to the floor as the pounding in my temples eased, and I tried to work out what had just happened.

Someone had given us away. I was pretty sure it wasn't Luc, but I could feel the tiny seed of a thought that Trevor had planted in my brain trying to sprout again.

What if he just wanted to humiliate you? What if he's been leading you on this whole time? He's just using you...

"No," I whispered to myself. "You're wrong. You just want me to off myself. Luc would never do that to anyone."

I clenched my fists.

Why am I hiding here? I know what we did, and I know what they think we did, and I know they're wrong. So why am I hiding? It's not like this really changes anything. If anything, it just makes it easier...

I pulled my phone out of my pocket and opened up text-messages.

"So, I heard that the word is out," I wrote.

He replied a few seconds later.

"Yeah, Sarah accidentally blurted something out. She says sorry."

"Well, I've already been accosted once. I'm hiding in the server archives. Come find me after class."

"OK. I'll do that. Sorry Jon."

"It's OK."

"I love you."

"Yeah."

I sighed and slipped my phone back into my pocket.

I woke up an hour later to the sound of someone knocking loudly on the door.

I got up quickly, and went over to the doors.

"Lucas? Is that you?" I called.

"No. It's Bill. Open up Jon, there's no one here but me."

Bill was the head of the IT department. My boss on campus. I unlocked the door and opened it.

"Sorry I locked you out" I said. "It's just been a really weird day, and I needed to get away from people."

"You don't have to apologize Jon," he said, smiling at me. "I know how it is sometimes. Anything I can do?"

I shook my head. "No."

"You sure?"

"Well... Could you block all non-faculty e-mail to my student account for a couple of days? I think I'm in for some serious hate-spam otherwise."

He nodded.

"Sure, I'll take care of that right now. You sure there's nothing else?"

"Not right now, no. But, when the teachers start asking where I disappeared to, could you tell them I was here?"

"Sure. I can do that. Oh, I think your friend is here. I'll see you tomorrow afternoon."

"Right. Thanks Bill."

I shouldered my bag and headed towards the doors, where Lucas was standing squinting into the gloom of the basement.

"Jon?"

"Yeah, it's me. Come on, let's go."

We ended up going to my house instead of Payne's. Rene had sent Jon home after groups of students from school started showing up to harass him behind the counter. But, on his way home, Jon had gotten texts from his neighbors warning him that there was a gang of students waiting for him outside his apartment. So, he went back to the computer store and worked in the back until Maya and I could pick him up.

"How am I going to do my homework without my computers?" Jon moaned as we drove back to my house.

"Relax, Jon. You can use mine," Maya said from the front seat. "This'll probably all be over by tomorrow afternoon anyway. It's not that big a deal."

"I hope so," he muttered, staring up at the roof of the car. "I hate it when all hell breaks loose like this."

Dinner was quiet. Jon was obviously pretty upset, and not in a mood to talk about anything. I was worrying about what would happen tomorrow, and Maya was just watching us.

After dinner, Jon and I both went up to my room.

"God, I fucking hate this!" He said, flinging himself down on my bed. "Why'd Sarah have to do something so stupid?"

"Jon, she's really sorry about it. And it's not like she's not suffering for it. From what I understand, nobody will even make eye-contact with her anymore."

"Well, bully for Sarah, then," he muttered, rubbing his eyes.

I sat down next to him.

"Jon, it's all gonna blow over in a few days. By the end of the semester I doubt that anybody'll even remember this happened."

I heard the phone ring downstairs.

"Probably school, wondering whether we need an armed guard to come in tomorrow." Jon said, bitterly.

There was silence for a moment, then:

"Lucas! Dad's on the phone for you!" Maya called from downstairs.

"Oh God," I moaned, getting up. "Come on, I'll be he'll want to talk to all of us."

"Hey, Dad?"

We were all gathered in the kitchen, the phone sitting in the middle of the table with the three of us sitting around it.

"Hi Lucas. Listen, your mother and I got a call from your school this evening. They say that there are rumors flying around that a student raped you. Is that true?"

I sighed.

"No, dad. They're not true. It just got blown completely out of proportion. That's not what happened."

"Can you tell me what *did* happen?"

"Um, if you've got time. It's kind of a long story."

"I've got time. Tell me what happened."

Fifteen Minutes Later

"Okay Lucas, I think I understand. Is Jon there now?"

"Yeah, he's here."

"Good. Jon, you should feel free to stay at our house as long as you need to. We've got plenty of room. If things don't blow over by the end of the week, we'll make arrangements for you to stay at least semi-permanently."

"Uh, Okay." Jon replied, giving me a look.

"Right. That's all, I guess."

"Is mom there?" I asked.

"No Lucas. Your mother should actually be arriving home tomorrow morning. She'll be helping you sort things out with school, and with Jon's work. You're already excused from school tomorrow, so I'd like you and Jon to go meet her at the airport."

"Okay. Is Jon excused too?"

"I've sent them an e-mail explaining that I've talked to you, and that there's been a gross misunderstanding. I've also asked that Jon be excused for at least the rest of the week for his own safety."

"Thanks Dad."

"No problem son. I'm sorry I had to call about such bad news. Goodnight kids."

He hung up.

"Well, at least he wasn't upset," Maya said, getting up and going back to doing the dishes. "You cool to pick mom up tomorrow Lucas?"

"Yeah."

I was watching Jon, who had pulled his phone out, and was glaring at the screen.

"What's up?"

"It's from my landlord. He says that some of the kids that were staking out my apartment got bored, so they went outside and started throwing rocks through the windows. He says he called the police, but they didn't catch anyone."

"So, they're not waiting for you to come home anymore?"

"No."

"Okay then, I guess we should go and at least get your clothes and your computers and whatever else is really important that's there while we can. Are the cops still there?"

"Yeah."

"Good. Let's go."

The police officer met us outside Jon's apartment building.

"We didn't go in, so we don't know if they broke anything inside. But the windows are pretty smashed up, so there's probably some damage. If you don't mind, I'd like to come up with you and get an estimate of the damages so that if we catch those responsible, we'll know how much to bill 'em."

"Sure, fine," Jon said, shrugging.

"If you come across a rock while you're packing up, don't touch it. We might be able to lift their fingerprints off it."

"Okay, we won't."

Jon unlocked the door and snapped on the light. I gasped, Jon groaned, and the police officer whistled through his teeth.

Both Jon's computers had been smashed, their wires snapped by their weight as they fell off the desk. His bed and desk were covered in broken glass, while the pile of books and hard drives on the table in front of the other window had kept that glass from coming in..

"Shit," Jon groaned, standing over his smashed iMac. "I can't afford to get a new one of these!"

I peered under his desk to check out the tower.

"Good news is that I think both the CPU's are intact. So you didn't really lose all that much."

"Yeah, I guess. It was still a really nice monitor though..."

"I know. Come on, let's just pack up the stuff you need and get out of here."

It took us about half an hour to get all the computer stuff into the car, and another fifteen minutes to collect Jon's other stuff. The police officer helped us tape trash bags over the broken windows, and clear the floor of broken glass before he left.

"Thanks for the estimate, boys. I'll call your 'super if we find anything."

"Thanks."

We watched him drive off, then got in the car and drove home.

Back at Lucas' house, Maya helped us unload all my crap from the car. It looked so strange, seeing a pile of my stuff in their big, clean house. Maya took one look at my laundry and whisked it away to wash it, leaving me standing awkwardly in their living room with Lucas.

"Hey, is it all right if I just take a shower and turn in tonight?" I asked, picking up my overnight bag with my spare clothes in it.

"Uh yeah, that's fine. There's a shower in to my room you can use if you want. I'll be up in a little bit to get ready for bed. I just want to talk to Maya first."

I nodded and went upstairs, my legs tired after many trips to and from my apartment. Up in his room, I stripped down and grabbed a towel out of my bag, then headed for the shower.

The warm water felt good after the too-long day. I stood under the flow for a long time, watching the water run over my scared forearms and off the ends of my fingers.

Funny, I thought, the one day I leave my arms unbound is the day everything comes unraveled.

I shake my head to chase away that thought, and grab his shampoo to wash my hair.

Midway through, I hear the door open.

"Jon? Is it all right if I brush my teeth?"

"Yeah, go ahead."

I stick my head back under the flow, rinsing the lather from my short hair.

"Where am I sleeping tonight?"

"Well, you could sleep in the spare room, like you did last time, or you could sleep with me."

"I think tonight I'd rather be alone, if that's okay," I said, wiping my eyes.

"Yeah, that's fine. I understand. You gonna come with me tomorrow to pick up mom?"

"I guess so. I'd feel weird being all alone in your house."

"Cool. Well, I'm going to bed. Turn out the light when you're done."

"Night Lucas."

We had to leave early the next morning to meet my mom at the airport. Jon was still half asleep when we got in the car, and he slept most of the way there. He only woke up as I pulled off the highway and onto short stay car park.

"We there?"

"Yeah. I was going to go wait in the terminal. Do you want to come with me, or just stay here and go back to sleep?"

He wiped the sleep from his eyes.

"I'll go with you. If I sleep too much longer I'll get really stiff."

Inside the airport, we found a bench facing the arrivals board. Mom's flight from Frankfurt was on time, so we had about a half hour to wait for her.

"Do you want me to get you anything for breakfast? I was going to get something for myself..." I said, getting up.

"Just some black tea, thanks."

I nodded and wandered off to find a coffee shop.

When I came back a few minutes later, Jon had fallen asleep again, his head resting on his shoulder. I smiled and sat down next to him.

"Jon, I've got your tea, if you can wake up to drink it."

"Wha? Oh, thanks Lucas." He sat up and took the cup from me. "Man, I'm really tired this morning. I guess yesterday took more out of me than I thought."

We sat and sipped our drinks and watched the departures board some more.

"What's your mom like?" He asked after a while.

"Oh, she's pretty nice. I don't get to see her and dad much these days, but they always come home for Christmas and they call on our birthdays. She's a lot like Maya, actually, although you should never say that to either of them."

"So, she's a member of the KGB, and she'll hatch stupid plots to get us to make out?"

"Well, maybe she's not *that* much like Maya. She's just really smart."

"Do you miss your parents while they're away?"

"I used to. These days I'm used to it, and they video chat with us often, so they never seem that far away. I mean, I still wish they were around a bit more often, but they're doing what they want to do and letting Maya and I do the same, so I can deal with it."

"Sounds nice."

I put my arm over his shoulder.

"She should be here any minute now. Do you want to go stand by the doors and wait?"

"Sure."

We walked over to the doors that led to the immigration checkpoints and took up station behind the metal barriers that kept the way clear for passengers.

"You nervous?" I asked, looking over at him.

"Maybe a little."

"Don't be. Oh look! Here she comes!"

Mom was waving to us from the crowd of passengers as they surged forth into the terminal in a great wave of humanity.

I grabbed Jon by the hand and pulled him through the crowd to where she was waiting for us.

"Hi mom," I said, letting Jon go and giving her a hug.

"Hi Lucas. It's good to see you again. Is this Jonathan?"

"Yeah. Jon, this is my mom."

He held out a hand for her to shake, gingerly, as if he expected to lose it.

"It's nice to meet you Mrs. Farrell," he said, looking up at her defiantly.

"Nice to meet you too, Jon. You can call me Anne, if you want. Now, Lucas, I'm tired and I want to get home. Let's go."

Mom fell asleep on the ride home. She snored gently in the back seat while Jon and I talked quietly up front.

"Do you have work today?"

"No, Rene called last night to say that I could take some paid vacation time until I get everything sorted out. I bet that was Maya's doing."

"Well, what were you planning on doing for the rest of the day then?"

"I'd like to get my computers back up and running again if I can. I don't have screens for them anymore, but I'd like to see if I can boot them up with my laptop."

"Cool. I'd offer to help, but I think I'd just be in the way."

"Thanks anyway."

"Yeah..."

"What?"

"When you're finished with that, would you be interested in finishing what we started Monday night?"

He blushed. "Uh, I... I guess so..."

"You don't have to if you don't want to," I said quickly.

"No, no. I do want to."

"I hope you'll both find time in your schedules to do your homework," My mother interjected, making both Jon and I jump.

"Mom! We thought you were asleep!"

"Yes, I know. Your plans are cute, honey, but you need to keep up with your school work."

"Yeah, I know."

Back at Lucas' house, I spent the rest of my morning trying to resurrect my computers. I didn't have much success booting them from my laptop, just enough to tell me that there wasn't anything seriously wrong with either of them.

Lucas kept peering around the corner to see if I was done. I pretended not to notice him for as long as I could, but eventually he figured me out.

"You're not getting anywhere, are you?" he asked, finally coming in and sitting down on the sofa.

"How can you tell?"

"You've been staring at the same screen on your computer for ten minutes without typing anything."

"Yeah. Everything seems fine; it just doesn't want to boot up with my laptop. I guess I'm going to have to buy some new monitors."

"So, you're done?"

"Yeah."

"Then let's go upstairs."

Up in his room again, I sat down on the bed while he closed the door. For the first time, I noticed that he had a picture of me on his desk: the one from last year's yearbook.

"Hey," he said quietly, sitting down next to me.

"I didn't know you had my picture on your desk."

"Oh, yeah. It's not a really good one, but I like it anyway," he murmured, resting his chin on my shoulder. "You look nice, but you're not smiling." I felt him turn his head and softly press his lips against my neck, his hands sliding around my waist and pulling me close.

"Mnnn..." I sighed. "Wow... That feels good."

"Maybe you'd better try it on me, then," he whispered.

"Sure."

I turned and, lifting his hair gently out of the way, pressed my mouth against the skin under his jaw-line, nibbling gently on his Adam's apple.

"Ohhh!" He moaned. "God, you were right Jon! That feels amazing."

I smiled, pulling back so I could see him again. His face was flushed, his eyes wide and sparkling.

"It's nice," I said, shrugging gently, "but your neck doesn't kiss me back."

He smiled back at me.

"No, it doesn't." He moved closer. "Do you want to lead, or shall I?"

"You lead," I breathed, leaning towards him.

Our lips met and locked, his tongue driving its way into my mouth as he pushed me back onto his bed. I kicked off my shoes as he climbed on top of me, his hands cradling my head, his thumbs slowly tracing the line of my jaw. My heart beat faster and faster, until the blood pounded in my temples and I felt dizzy, my breaths coming short and shallow.

Suddenly he broke off, I heard a brief rustling of cloth, and he was back again. Now his hands pressed against my chest, pushing me down as he sought my lower lip out with his teeth and nipped at it.

"Ah!" I gasped, squeezing my eyes shut.

Luc stopped and rolled off me.

"Sorry! Was that too much?"

"Wha? No, no... Keep going..." I opened my eyes. "Wait, what happened to your shirt?" I asked.

"Nothing." He said, trying to look innocent.

"Lucas, we're not getting undressed. Come on, put it back on."

He sighed, and went to go get it from the corner where he'd thrown it.

"I killed the mood, didn't I?" He asked as he pulled it over his head.

"Yeah. I wish we could have kept going too, but the moment's over."

There was a knock on the door and Maya opened it, leering at both of us.

"What, done already? I thought you two would be humping like bunnies by now!"

"MAYA! GET OUT!" Lucas cried, chasing her out the door.

I sighed and swung my legs over the edge of the bed, shoving my feet back into my sneakers.

Why did I stop him? I asked myself. I didn't care on Monday. Why now?

"So what happened?" Maya asked, setting down a basket of clean clothes next to her favorite chair in the living room.

"I don't really know," I said. "One minute, we're making out, and suddenly he's saying 'we're not getting undressed,' and then you came in and interrupted before I could ask him why." I sighed. "He didn't seem to have a problem with it Monday Night..."

"Well, maybe not. But, correct me if I'm wrong, weren't you just sleeping? Maybe he's not as comfortable with the idea of roaming hands as you are, and he wants to keep his clothes on if there's that possibility."

"Maybe..."

"I'm sure that's part of it, at least," she said, holding up a pair of underwear. "Are these yours or Jon's?"

"They're not mine. They must be his."

She whistled.

"Maybe it's a good thing you didn't get very far with him today. Look at how stretched out the crotch is on these!"

"Maya!" I cried, turning bright red. "Don't say things like that!"

She laughed.

"Calm down, Lucas. I'm just trying to make a joke. Seriously, I think that you need to let Jon take the lead when it comes to physical intimacy. He's the one who's going to have trouble with it, not you."

I let out a long breath, thinking about it.

"I guess you're right. So, from now on, I'm the inside spoon until Jon says otherwise. Sound good?"

She smiled.

"Sounds good. I know you'll enjoy it. You know you just want Jon to have his way with you..."

"Very funny, Maya," I groaned, getting up. "Have fun folding Jon's underwear."

"I'll put the cutest pairs on top, just for you," she calls after me as I wander into the kitchen.

I decided to wait until Thursday night to talk to Jon about sleeping together. I figured he just needed some time to adjust to living with Maya and I. Thursday evening happened to be the perfect night to talk about it, too. Mom and Maya had gone out to the Pond for drinks, so we had the house to ourselves.

"So, about what happened yesterday..." I started, pushing a piece of broccoli back and forth across my plate. "I shouldn't have tried to start anything without asking you first."

"Hmmm..."

"Listen, I'd like to sleep together again tonight, if that's okay. Just like we did Monday. No kissing or sex or anything, just sleeping."

He looked at me for a second, and then let his gaze fall back to his food.

"Okay," he said. "But we're BOTH wearing pants, all right?"

"Do we have to?"

"I'd feel better."

"Does it have to be pants? Can't we just keep our shorts on?"

He sighed, exasperated with me.

"Lucas..."

I held up my hands to stop him.

"No, it's okay. If you want to wear pants, we'll wear pants. I'm sorry I tried to get you to go farther."

"Thanks."

We finished our dinner, and then I did the dishes while Jon put the leftovers in the refrigerator.

"Hey, do you want to watch a movie or something before bed?" I asked, gesturing towards the TV room.

"Uh, yeah, I guess." He said. "I might want to take a shower first, so maybe just a short one."

"Sure."

Once Jon was safely in the shower, I stripped out of my shirt and jeans, and threw on a pair of thin cotton pants that I sleep in sometimes. Then I ran downstairs and started going through the movie shelf, looking for something cute and short for us to watch. Eventually, I settled for *My Neighbor Totoro*, an old copy from when Maya and I were kids.

I was just cueing it up when Jon came down, his hair still wet, from the shower.

"Hey! I just put the movie in. How was your shower?"

"Fine," he said, stretching. "Where should I sit?"

"The big chair over there has the best view," I said, pointing. "I'll join you in a minute. I just want to get a blanket."

When I came back, Jon was watching the opening titles, the screen's glow reflecting off his bare torso. I sat down next to him, spreading the blanket over both of us. As the movie started, I leaned up against him, resting my head on his shoulder.

Jon had to shake me awake when the movie ended. I'd fallen asleep on his shoulder halfway through. Shaking my head sleepily, I followed him up the stairs to my room.

"Hey, you can go ahead without me. I'll join you in a minute," Jon said, heading into the bathroom.

I crawled under the covers and got comfortable. A few minutes later Jon came back.

"Do you want to be inside again?" He asked softly.

"Mhm."

"Okay."

He lifted the covers up and slid in next to me, pulling me into the curve of his body.

"Um, are you comfy?" He asked.

"Yeah. I'm good. Goodnight Jon."

END PART ONE.