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Scrambled Eggs

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Author Bio

Amy Butcher is a small-town girl who's attending college in an even smaller location. She's a diehard tree-hugger, an uber-liberal and a super-vegetarian. She likes writing, traveling and macaroni and cheese an awful lot. She's currently a freshman, double-majoring in both English and Creative Writing with heady plans to journey to New Zealand sometime in the near future.

Scrambled Eggs

"Look at it outside," he said. His hand fingered at the window shade. His eyes, normally a deep, dark aquamarine, reflected a pristine white as he spoke. "I can't believe you Pennsylvanians call *this* snow."

"It's higher than the front step," she protested, pulling her shirt on over her head. "There's at least a good four inches out there."

"Three *at the most*," he noted, shaking his head. "No more than three."

The girl sighed disappointedly and turned, her long blonde hair spilling out in tufts that intertwined and tangled across her back. Her eyes, sleepy and idle, glanced at the streets below. There, outside, the entire town lay covered in a thin layer of milky debris. Tall brick buildings looked like gingerbread houses, their rooftops caked in creamy, thick frosting that oozed and spilled. Window ledges appeared thick and heavy from the several inches of snow they held and tiny icicles hung down, shimmering in the emerging morning sun. Below, couples hurried along on the sidewalk together, their arms entwined, their faces shriveling and shaking as they went.

"Yes, it looks awfully cold," he said, nodding his head affirmatively, "but this isn't a *real* snow storm."

The girl turned her body away from his frame. Extending an arm, she reached for her navy blue and white sweatshirt—the one she had bought when she had first arrived on campus, back in the fall, back when the leaves littered the ground with pastel oranges and brilliant reds. She looked for her sweatpants but couldn't find them. She sat, chilled, and wiped at her sleepy eyes.

"I'm glad you stayed over last night," he commented, "I didn't think you would. I'm just sorry you'll have to walk home in this."

"I don't mind the snow," she smiled.

Outside a plow truck drove by, spitting gritty dark snow up onto the windowpane. The boy grinned, shaking his head. "*Plows?*" he murmured.

Finally, he turned away from the glass. "Are you hungry?" he asked, moving across the room and leaning against the ivory countertop. Little tufts of white fur stuck out of the corners of his slippers where his feet met the interior. They were cute, brown little things that made squeaky noises when he walked and smelled rich and musky.

Though her stomach ached, she didn't want to trouble him. Instead she avoided his question, ducking her head through the opening of the sweatshirt and pulling it down over the overlarge, dull T-Shirt she had slept in. The newfound heat sent warm little shivers up her spine and she shook

lightly. Feeling his eyes on her, she glanced up at him, a small smile creasing, subconsciously, over the corners of her lips.

"I'll make you something," he said definitively, turning his back to her before she could protest. "I think I have some eggs in here. You eat eggs, right?"

"I love eggs," she said, nodding, "Yeah, yeah, I can eat eggs."

"A person never knows, you know, when it comes to you vegetarians." He removed a small white carton from the refrigerator and reached into the cabinet for a bowl. Plucking a large egg from its casing, he cracked the egg lightly on the side of the ceramic dish and plunked it into a pan that sat, almost deliberately, on a stovetop burner.

His hair was puffy this morning. It stuck up in soft little patches that spread across his entire head. She imagined her fingers combing through it lightly, her body enclosed around his, the two of them perhaps sitting on a warm little couch in front of a warm little fireplace. She imagined them old and wrinkled, his gray hair peaking out in tufts between her soft fingers. She could practically hear their grandchildren as they ran about the house carelessly. She sighed.

"Toast?" he asked, turning back to look at her. His eyes caught hers and he smiled somewhat bashfully.

"You've been to Thailand," she announced abruptly, her body suddenly sitting upright.

"I have," he said, turning himself so that he was fully facing her, "yes I have."

"You've been to Bangkok, too."

The boy folded his arms in front of him and reclined against the countertop. He smiled unknowingly, his eyes softening around their edges. "I have. What's it matter?"

"And England, too, you've been to England."

Curious, the boy moved away from the countertop now and stepped closer to her. He took a seat beside her on the couch, his legs tucked together almost defensively. With his hands, he picked up her own hand, his fingers coiling gently around the little nub of her thumb. "Yeah, sweet thing? I've been to England."

The girl sighed and looked away, her eyes mapping the walls of his apartment. Here and there lay framed paintings of Harvard and other Massachusetts memorabilia. She knew his father had gone there; she wondered briefly if he had been a traveler, too.

"You like music," she stated.

"Love it," he nodded, obviously still unsure as to what she was getting at. His eyes seemed to be scrutinizing her, his lips quivering anxiously.

"You can play a lot of instruments."

"Guitar, piano, mandolin," he nodded affirmatively, continuing, "bass, djembe, ukulele, banjo, harmonica." Reflective in thought, he paused before adding, "Yeah, I guess that is a lot."

"You want to pursue music when you get older?" She asked him pressingly. Her eyes zoomed in on him now, her face tightening around his face. She saw the way his pupils dilated, his brow creased.

He sighed, biting at his lip. "Yeah, you know." His hand squeezed around hers. "If I could pursue it, well, yeah—that'd be great."

Her smile faded. "You'd tour the country, never be around." She glanced outside again, only this time the houses looked sad, trapped in the great burden of winter weather. The front doors stood miserably, unable to open, behind a great wall of solid snow. Icicles hung in sharp little swords like weapons or incarcerating prison bars.

Frustrated, he stood up, moving away from her and the couch, moving closer towards the kitchen and his heating pan. He turned the knob on the stovetop and, with his back to her, asked, "How do you like your eggs?" "You've seen it all," she continued. "You've seen the world."

"Not all of it."

"You have. You've seen most."

"Many have seen more."

"Still," she said, nodding, "you've seen more than me. You've seen Colorado—do you know that I have never even seen the Grand Canyon?"

"It's nothing special."

"It's tremendously special; it looks so beautiful. I'd love to go. But I don't, you know that? I never go."

He turned, glancing at her, then left his kitchen position to sit beside her on the couch. "Well," he said slowly, "you've seen France."

"Haven't you?"

"No," he said meekly, his smile fading. "I haven't seen France."

"Well." The girl thought for a minute, then added, "I haven't seen Seoul."

He laughed. "I only saw it briefly. I was in the airport."

"I haven't been on a Thai beach. I haven't met a Thai dog."

He smiled.

"You said you've pet a Thai dog."

"Two, yes." He smiled and placed his hand back in hers.

"And you've eaten beetles. You've sat, quietly, reflectively, in a monastery. You have a journal that was painted by a street vendor in Chang Mai. You rode an overnight train. You spoke Thai and made foreign friends."

He just smiled, reclining back in his seat.

"I listened to all of your stories," she said, continuing, "I've listened to them all. Every single one."

"Apparently," he grinned.

"For two months now I've listened," she continued, "and I've come to realize something." She sighed, adding quietly, "You're a traveling man."

He laughed at this, his body coiling up, his frame shaking lightly. Calmly he consented, "I suppose I am."

"You're always on the go." She nodded, clearly overwhelmed, her eyes now glancing down into her lap timidly. "I've lived in the same place for eighteen years."

"Souderton, yeah," he nodded. Then, as if trying to comfort her, he added, "Well, you know, it really does sound like a great little place."

"It was." She paused. "I knew my neighbors so well."

"That's real nice."

"I babysat the same kids for seven years."

"How sweet."

"Aidan and Katie. I watched them grow up, you know?"

"That's sweet hon."

"I was there when they bought their puppy, see? And I was there when that puppy grew up into a dog."

"Seven years is a long time."

"It is. I was there when Aidan first started to walk."

"Aw."

"Katie lost her first tooth on an apple."

"Yeah?"

"I've just—I stayed in one place my entire life. I haven't been around, you know, haven't traveled like you."

"Well that's all right..."

"Yes," she interrupted, "it is all right, but it's not like you."

He was quiet.

"You want to tour the country. You want to go from venue to venue."

"But," the boy began.

"And I want a little white picket fence and a little white picket fence life."

The boy stared ahead blankly.

"I want daffodils in my garden and frogs in a pond. I want tulips and daisies and children on a seesaw in the backyard."

They sat in silence.

"The waitress at the diner I go to," she stumbled over her words, her voice now slightly shaky, "she knows my order by heart."

"You always order the same thing?"

"Lemon meringue pie and two cups of coffee. Two sugars, two creams."

He shook his head, "That's kind of boring."

"I like things to stay the way they are," she stated. "I guess I just don't like change."

The boy stood up again, his body tense. He looked down and plucked the little pan from its stovetop, swirling the contents around slowly. "How thoroughly cooked do you like your eggs?" he asked distractedly.

Sadly, the girl shook her head, lowering her gaze. "However you like them is fine."

Quietly, the boy scooped the eggs onto two plates. He added a slice of toast to each, then smoothly moved over to her. "I cook my eggs depending on how I feel," he explained, lowering the plate to her lap carefully. He took a seat on the couch, took her hand and smiled, "Today, my eggs aren't running."

Outside, flurries began to fall and the gingerbread houses gleamed with morning luster.