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## The Couch's Mates

Georgie's first day back at work after Christmas was a day off for Sean. The Friday was a way to ease back into normalcy. He spent an hour that afternoon at Georgie's preferred grocery store scratching his head trying to put together a meal the way she always did. He couldn't hear her. He knew that. But he could, theoretically, cook for her. She needed to eat, but hadn't done much of it recently.

Finally, he acquired the ingredients, and spent hours working to do what might take Georgie thirty minutes. When he heard her key in the door, he was already pouring iced herbal tea in glasses.

"Hey Georgie! I made us some...of that stuff I can't pronounce. With some chicken." He greeted her as she closed the door behind her.

"Quinoa." Georgie said, hollowed all out as she plopped down at their kitchen table. "You cooked?"

"Yeah. How was your day?" Sean's heart was teetering. Hoping he could cheer her at least a pint.

"Better now." Without warning, and only a gentle nudge from me, she broke down all at once. Crying into her hands. He couldn't get a word out of her for five minutes, then he got all the words.

"Your Mom took me to lunch today." She began.

*Lunch. You idiot. Why didn't you think of that? You could've encouraged her halfway through the day.*

"Oh. How did that go?" He asked gently, plating their meal as he spoke.

"She told me for Sharon's birthday, Dad signed them up for a 5k that's right before their goal day. I think she'll rock it. She was doing well when... you know, the last time we talked." Georgie tried to calm herself. She only managed to sob a few more times.

"Baby, she just needs time to process."

Georgie ferociously shook her head. "I've called her dozens of times. I've left her some messages. Texted her. Even freshman year when she thought I cheated on our Algebra final to beat her for the highest grade in the class, she heard me out and we made up the next day. She's never avoided me like this."

It was true. Even New Year's had come and gone. The two women always had a sleepover on New Year's Eve and caffeinated themselves beyond reason, playing board games until the sun rose in the new year. This year, Sharon hadn't even called.

Georgie and Sean had been busy making funeral arrangements, and Georgie was avoiding caffeine due to pregnancy, but a phone call might have been a nice gesture, at least.

"This isn't ninth grade Algebra, Georgie." Sean seemingly had to remind her as he set food and drink before her. "This is my life. I didn't know what I was giving her when I gave her that gift. I still don't regret it."

"It was a journal," she rolled her eyes.

"You've said that."

"It was everything. Practically everything since you missed me on St. John, I've written something about you and me. Something I would have told her if she knew about us. I didn't want her to have missed out when we finally told her." Georgie sniffled, her face distorting. "According to Mom, she read a page and threw it away. I never imagined she'd react that way."

"Yes, you did." Sean corrected her. "That's why we kept it between us. Let's bless this mess."