Title: Garlic Parmesan
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Summary: When Lea first moved in with Shaun, she convinced him to order in Atomic Wings, and got terrible diarrhea. But Shaun prescribed the perfect mixture of Pepto and ginger root, and here is the story of how that anecdote told by Lea in episode 5x03 (possibly) played out.
Timeframe: This takes place in season 4 during Lea's early pregnancy, somewhere around episodes 4x13 and 4x14 (referred to as "present day" in the story).
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Present Day

"What do you want to cook for dinner tonight?" Shaun asked Lea from the kitchen counter.

Lea pushed away the book she'd been reading, closed her eyes and breathed in a long breath. "Ugh, I don't know. I'm not really hungry right now."

"I am," Shaun said.

"Then maybe just cook something you'll like. Berry is being very uncooperative today."

"Are you feeling sick?"

She sighed. "Yeah. Kinda. I dunno, it's hard to explain. I'm just… not hungry."

"You have to eat. The baby needs nutrition."

"Yeah, I know. And don't worry, I've eaten."

"You should be eating a healthy and balanced diet. The food you eat can have an effect on the pregnancy, including gestational diabetes, the chance of needing a C-section, anemia and other infections—"

"Shaun…" Lea interrupted.

"An early birth or low birth-weight."

"Shaun," she said more assertively. "I'm eating a healthy diet. You don't need to worry."

"What have you eaten today?"

"I will make you a list if you need to know."

"You should eat 1,800 calories per day during the first trimester."

She sighed. "Yeah, okay, I didn't exactly count calories."

"We will make a diet schedule for you. Whole-grain and fortified products have high folic acid and iron content. It is recommended to have four to five servings of vegetables a day, two of which should be green and leafy vegetables, and dairy products will be a source of protein, calcium, and phosphorus."

At the mere thought of cold milk, a wave of nausea washed over Lea, and she closed her eyes and swallowed. She must have made a sound, because Shaun looked very concerned when she opened them again.

“Are you feeling sick again?”

All she could do was nod before she had to run to the bathroom and hurl her afternoon snack into the toilet. She didn’t even have time to close the door behind her, and it took way too long with a few too many dry-heaves for her stomach to settle.

If these were supposed to be the joys of pregnancy, it sure didn’t feel very joyful.

From the corner of her eye, she saw Shaun edging closer, wetting a washcloth and holding it out to her wordlessly before he took a tentative step back again when she took it from his hand.

She gave him a small smile. “Thank you.”

His voice was hesitant. “Should we cook pasta with olive oil again tonight?”

“Shaun, can we please not talk about food right now?”

He blinked. “Okay.”

With a disgusted, “Ugh,” she got up, flushed the toilet and washed her hands and mouth. Shaun was still hovering near the bathroom door, and as gross as she felt, she loved him for it. It had already been like this back in the day when they were still roommates. Some things never changed.

She turned to him. “Do you remember the Atomic Wings incident from way back when?”

“You… said you didn’t want to talk about food.”

“I don’t. This isn’t about the food. Though, strangely enough, I wouldn’t mind chicken wings right now.”

“Chicken wings are not very nutritious *or* healthy.”

“They do have the calories, though.”

Shaun just uttered one of his hums that told her he wasn’t happy with the fact that she was actually right.

She looked at him. “Look, I know it’s not the most sensible choice, but all those things you mentioned make me really queasy, and chicken wings sound pretty awesome right about now.”

“They also made you very sick.”

She chuckled as she went past him, lightly touching his arm. “So you *do* remember.”

“I remember it very well.”

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Two Years Ago

"You know what we're gonna do tonight, Shaun?"

Shaun turned around from where he was sitting on the couch, that adorably clueless half-pout on his face. "I don't know what you will be doing tonight, but I am reading a book about the human genome. It's—"

"Nope," Lea interrupted him, walking over to the couch to plop down next to Shaun. "We are celebrating tonight."

"Celebrating what?"

"Your first successful conquest of the streets of San Jose in the Striped Tomato."

He briefly looked at her. "It… wasn't my first."

"It was your first *successful* one."

"I accidentally put the car in reverse in front of Dr. Glassman's house, and I almost hit a bollard when I entered the hospital parking lot."

"*Almost* being the operative word. Come on, you did great, Shaunie. It's a cause for celebration."

He earmarked the book and put it on the coffee table. The cover was black and it read 'Genome' in large white letters. "Are we going out for Tequila shots and karaoke?"

She smiled. "Nope. I was thinking something a little less high maintenance. How about we finally watch *Guardians of the Galaxy 2* that's been on the to-watch pile for way too long and order in Atomic Wings?"

Shaun looked somewhat confused. "Is that a type of food?"

Lea chuckled. "Yes, dummy. It's the most amazing chicken wings you'll ever eat!"

He drew a face. "I don't like chicken wings."

"Have you ever tried them?"

"One of my foster mothers used to take us to Domino's every Sunday. She always ordered chicken wings for me and the other children. They were greasy and I didn't like the skin."

"Oh God, yeah, Domino's wings have nothing on Atomic Wings. I promise you, this will be a whole other experience. They'll be super yummy and just the right kind of spicy, and the garlic parmesan sauce is to die for."

"Hm." That was one of Shaun's *'I don't really like the idea, but I also don't wanna say no'* hums. She could tell by now.

"We can get a combo and you can eat the waffle fries if you don't like the wings. Or a grilled chicken sandwich or a burger, but I *really*, really recommend the wings, they're amazing! Come on, Shaun. Sometimes, when you try new things, they might actually pleasantly surprise you. Please say yes!" She gave him what she hoped was her best batting eyelashes plea look.

“Okay,” he agreed after a short moment of hesitation.

“Yes!” she triumphed.

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Present Day

Shaun was balancing the laptop in his lap, looking at Lea, ready to order. “Are you sure you want the Atomic Wings? You said yesterday that spicy food made you nauseous.”

“Yeah, and that’s one hundred percent my hormones speaking, because this is what happens during pregnancy. One day you think pickles are the most disgusting thing in the world, and the next you want to eat a whole jar and drink the juice, too.”

Shaun visibly drew up his shoulders. “Pickles *are* the most disgusting thing in the world. Do you want me to put them on the shopping list?”

She shook her head. “Right now I’ll settle for the chicken wings.”

Shaun didn’t look very happy, and she knew it was because he’d rather see her make healthier choices right now. She added, “You know what? Let’s order some salad with it.”

Shaun scrolled down the page. “They have Chicken Caesar Salad or Buffalo Blue Salad. Do you want to know what’s in it?”

“Nope. Buffalo Blue, please.”

“Do you want the garlic parmesan sauce with the chicken wings?”

“Ugh, no,” she shuddered. “I haven’t been able to touch that one since the violent diarrhea incident.”

“How do you know it was the garlic parmesan sauce?”

“What else would it have been? You and I both had the wings, and the sauce was the one thing you barely touched because you said it was too salty.”

He read out the different sauce options they had, and she told him, “I’ll have the Honey Mustard, thank you.”

Shaun clicked a few more times, finally stating, “I will have a grilled chicken sandwich, and this says that the food should be delivered in approximately 35 minutes.”

She smiled at him. “Sounds awesome, Shaunie. Thank you so much for putting up with my hormone crazed cravings these days.”

He gave her a smile back. “You’re welcome.”

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Two Years Ago

It was around 3 am that Lea realized something wasn't quite right. There was a strange rumbling in her bowels, which quickly turned into a painful cramp, and she barely made it to the toilet to expel whatever was wreaking havoc in her large intestine.

The cramps kept coming, as did the rest along with it, and there came a point where she just wanted to curl up next to the toilet bowl and die.

She eventually managed to crawl back into bed, feeling gross and weak and empty, wishing for relief that didn't really come. She must have fallen back into a slumber at some point, but about an hour later, she gave a repeat performance that was just as bad as the first time around. She might have let out a few whimpers along the way. At least this time, she had been able to close the door behind her.

When she finally emerged from the bathroom, her head throbbing, there was Shaun, sitting in the chair at the dining table nearest the bathroom. Oh God, she had woken him.

"Are… you okay?" he asked her.

She sighed. "No, I'm not okay, which you've probably heard, and I'm sorry if I woke you."

"Are you sick?"

"Yeah, I think the wings gave me the runs." She looked at Shaun, and she suddenly wondered, "Are you feeling okay?"

"Yes, I'm fine."

"So it's just me. That's mildly reassuring."

"Are you nauseous? Do you have a fever?"

She inhaled. "Look, Shaun, it's just food poisoning, and it'll go away once I'm done expelling whatever the culprit is. I'm tired and achy, and I know you wanna help, but I don't need Dr. Murphy right now. I'm going back to bed. And so should you."

"It is most likely a staphylococcus aureus infection, which can be caused by eating certain—"

"Shaun," she interrupted him, the headache pounding against her forehead, "As much as I appreciate your enthusiasm, I don't need the medical details right now."

His gaze trailed her as she went to her door, and she knew he didn't look happy, but she was past the point of wanting to cater to Shaun's emotional sensitivities. She gave it one last try, turning around to face him before she closed the door. "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to sound like a jerk, but I feel really crappy right now, and I just wanna sleep, okay? Oh, and you should probably avoid the bathroom for a while."

His gaze met hers for a brief moment before he said, "Okay."

She closed the door behind her and wished for quick relief, which didn't really come.

Lea didn't know if she'd slept much at all after this. She'd tossed and turned, wishing she'd taken an ibuprofen for the headache, but not willing to expend the energy on getting up again to get one from the bathroom.

She thought she had heard noises from the living room earlier, and she still felt guilty for keeping Shaun up along with her, but there wasn't anything she could do to help that, either.

Another bout of exigency finally made her take the trip to the bathroom for the too manyeth time. The living room was dark and empty, and she hoped that Shaun had gone back to bed after all.

After this round, she felt completely drained and lifeless, and she finally shuffled out of the bathroom, having remembered this time to take one of the ibuprofen pills. She'd also rifled through the medication box for anything that could help with diarrhea, but neither Shaun nor she had had any previous incidents, and it wasn't anything that they kept medication around for, it seemed. Maybe something they should remedy.

The smallest hints of daylight were teasing in from the patio, and she noticed that some of the lights were on, giving the living room the muted and cozy atmosphere she liked so much about the place. Shaun was standing at the kitchen counter, surprisingly fully dressed.

She frowned. "Why are you up?"

He turned around and walked towards her, a glass with a neon pink looking concoction that looked anything but enticing. "I made you this."

She blinked against the headache that was still relenting. "Please tell me that's not Pepto Bismol."

He nodded. "Pepto Bismol Diarrhea with two teaspoons of ginger juice." He had a self-satisfied little smile on his face. He added, "It is cherry flavored."

Lea made a face, shuffling over to the couch, drawing the Pendleton blanket around her shoulders as she settled against the backrest. "That sounds super gross. I hope you don't think I'm gonna drink that."

She immediately regretted her rebuttal, because Shaun had probably spent quite some time figuring out her best course of symptom relief, and the kicked puppy look on his face told her she wasn't far off. He supplemented it with an, "It will make you feel better."

"Seriously, Shaun, that looks super disgusting and I can smell the fake cherry flavor from over here. Just thinking about it makes me want to puke."

"Are you also vomiting in addition to diarrhea?"

"No, and I hope that that's not on the agenda for later."

"It is very unlikely that you would be developing delayed nausea."

"That's at least some good news."

Shaun put the glass down on the coffee table and pushed it over towards her. She looked at it, not wanting to touch it with a ten foot pole, but then she pondered… "Shaun, did you go out to buy this?"

He nodded. “Yes.”

She gave him a look. “Aw, Shaun, you didn’t have to.”

He got up and went to get something else, which turned out to be a cardboard medication package that he put on the table next to the Pepto glass. “Pepto Bismol uses bismuth subsalicylate which has bactericidal effects, and ginger improves absorption and assimilation of essential nutrients and aids in digestion.”

He opened the cardboard package and took out the pills inside, put them on the table. “You should also take two capsules of loperamide now and another one after each time you have to go to the toilet, but not more than eight in total.”

Lea didn’t know what to say. Shaun had gone out in the wee hours of the morning to buy her medication. She wanted to hug him right at that moment, because this was a 100% Shaun, and he was so dedicated and caring and sweet, and she was sure no other roommate in the world would consider doing anything like this for her without even being asked or prompted.

He looked at her, and something must have prompted him to say her name. “Lea?”

“Shaun… You didn’t have to do this for me.”

“I want you to feel better.”

She looked at the glass with the pink liquid in it again, and she suddenly knew with a hundred percent certainty that she would have to make any attempt she could to drink it, no matter how disgusting it would taste.

And disgusting, it certainly was. So much so that she had to hold her nose closed with her left hand while she drank it. She made it through half the glass before she had to stop in order not to gag.

Shaun was watching her guardedly the whole time, and finally asked, “Does it taste very disgusting?”

“Yeah, it really does.”

“It will help with your symptoms.”

“That’s the only reason that I’m even forcing this down my throat right now.” Which wasn’t exactly true, was it? Shaun was the reason. And the belly cramps and the diarrhea.

“And you need to stay hydrated.” He got up and got his backpack. From it, he extracted four different bottles of Gatorade that he lined up on the table. “I bought different flavors. I don’t like the Lemon-Lime or the Fruit Punch, but maybe you do.”

“My God, Shaunie, did you get me a whole diarrhea care package?”

He smiled a small smile. “Yess.”

“What did I do to deserve you?”

He looked at her. “I don’t know how to answer that.”

“You shouldn’t,” she chuckled. “That was a rhetorical question.”

He let out a hum and started unpacking more items to lay them out on the coffee table. There was a bunch of four bananas, soda crackers, and a few single-serve containers with apple sauce.

Shaun explained, “These are called BRAT foods, which stands for bananas, rice, apples and toast. I didn’t buy rice or toast because we already have those. BRAT foods are all bland and won’t aggravate the digestive system, and they have binding capabilities, so they will help firm up your stool.”

“Ew, Shaun, TMI, because that’s kinda gross.”

He gave her a brief look. “No, it is not. It is simple chemistry and medical and nutritional facts.”

“Facts that are kinda gross when we’re talking about my bodily fluids.”

“Lea, I am a doctor.”

“Yes, I know. Still gross.”

If she had to keep a list of things that she would never in a million years want her awesomely sweet roomie to experience, it was her having to deal with a dysfunctional bowel, and him being right there through the worst of it.

Yet, she couldn’t deny that she was glad that he was.

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Present Day

An hour later, and Lea very much regretted having ordered the chicken wings. As good as they had tasted in the moment, this thing with the sudden nausea was really doing a number on her, and she dreaded the idea that it might still go on for weeks to come.

The rim of the toilet bowl was cold underneath her palms as she dry-heaved twice more, with a worried Shaun hovering behind her.

“Shaun, you don’t have to be here for this. It’ll pass, and I feel kinda gross and—”

She heaved again, but her now empty stomach didn’t yield anything else, and she spit the remaining saliva in her mouth into the toilet. “This is disgusting, and I know you wanna help, but there isn’t really anything you can do.”

He looked at her, then quietly said, “Okay,” and left the bathroom.

Thankfully, the nausea didn’t last much longer, and she cleaned herself up and walked over to the couch where Shaun was already sitting. She scooted closer and took his hand, gently running her thumb across it. “I’m sorry,” she said.

“For what?” he asked with a questioning look on his face.

“For pushing you away just now.”

He gave a little shrug. “It’s okay. I understand.”

She squeezed his hand slightly, and then she had to smile. “This feels reminiscent of the wings incident, too.”

He turned his head in her direction. “Do you want me to make you Pepto Bismol and ginger root again?”

“God no. That stuff tasted terrible. I’m surprised I didn’t puke it up right there and then.”

“But it helped.”

“Yeah, it did. I really did feel a lot better afterwards. And I never told you how sweet that was, and how much I appreciated you being there for me during that whole terrible thing. I was super disgusting and that must have been really yucky for you.”

He met her eyes and held her gaze for a very long Shaun-second. “You weren’t disgusting. You were sick.”

“Yeah, with violent belly cramps and explosive poop. How is that not disgusting?”

“I work in a hospital. I am exposed to disgusting things very frequently.”

“Hm, yeah, I guess that’s true. But at the time I was really uncomfortable and, you know, kinda embarrassed.”

“Did you not want me there?”

“No. I mean, I don’t know. I thought it would really gross you out.”

“It didn’t gross me out. I wanted to help you feel better.”

“Yeah, okay, but isn’t that what being a doctor is all about? What you do with all your patients?”

“They are not you.”

The way he said it, it sounded like an absolute statement, like it was the answer to all of Lea’s questions. And maybe it was.

“Shaun, were you in love with me back then?”

Shaun let out a hum, one of those where she knew he wasn’t comfortable with giving a truthful answer, or sometimes those where he didn’t quite know how to put into words what was in his head. She pressed on. “Were you?”

“You were not in love with *me*.”

That was not an answer. Or maybe it was. “Shaun, that was two years ago. Why didn’t you ever say anything?”

“You were dating Jake.”

“Yeah, I was, wasn’t I? God, I was so oblivious back then. Why didn’t I see it?”

Shaun looked at her for a very long moment—longer than he normally would—before he said, “Maybe you weren’t ready.”

There was so much truth in that statement that it was uncanny that it had come from Shaun. Or maybe it wasn’t. He’d obviously given this some thought.

“You didn’t see that at the time, though, did you?”

“Hm.” His eyes darted across the opposite wall. “Maybe… not.”

“Do you believe in fate?”

That question seemed to come out of the blue for him. “Hm. No, I don’t think I do. Do you?”

“I don’t know. Maybe. I mean, was it fate that brought us together?”

“It was a level 5.8 earthquake and me talking to you over a radio while I was amputating a woman’s leg underneath a collapsed building.”

She had to let out a short laugh. “That is true, but was that earthquake fate? Was me being there to listen to you that night fate?”

“Schrödinger’s cat,” Shaun said.

Lea looked at him, her brow creasing into a puzzled frown. “You’ll have to expand on that.”

“Asking whether us being together is fate is like Schrödinger’s cat. There are only two answers to that question, and no one will ever know, because both outcomes are possible, but it’s impossible to determine which one is correct.”

She took his hand and intertwined her fingers with his. “You are such a smart cookie, and I love you for it more than you will ever know.”

“We are both very smart, and I love you, too.”

Lea wanted to melt in his arms right there and then, but she settled for leaning against his side, momentarily forgetting about the last remnants of nausea still prickling in her stomach as Shaun’s arm came around her and drew her ever so gently closer.