


**Title:** Leave You Standing In The Dark
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**Summary:** The walk home after getting fired by Dr. Han is long and wet, and there's an unsuspecting Lea waiting for Shaun at the apartment. Missing scene from post episode 2x17.
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Almost midnight. Wow, Shaun was getting home really late tonight. Noises from the door, familiar to Lea by now, the door opened and there he was.

"Oh, hey. Late night?" she greeted him from where she was sitting on the couch.

He turned away from her, and for a split second she thought he was going to turn on his heel and walk out again.

Something was wrong, she could tell.

Approaching him, she saw he was soaking wet, his face all distress and anguish, his eyes wide and red. "Shaun? What's wrong? My God, you're dripping wet."

He blinked a few times, his mouth pressed into a thin line.

"Shaun, talk to me."

He didn't. He just stood there, silent and distraught, droplets of rain dripping off the ends of his curls, his arms limply by his side.

“Come here. Let’s get you dry, at least.”

She wasn’t sure how she was supposed to do this without touching him, so she started with the most obvious, gently prying him out of the rain-drenched coat, then his button-down.

“Shaun, can you sit down, please?” she tried to coax him, and to her surprise, he actually sat down at the table.

When she came out of the bathroom with a towel, he had at least taken off his shoes and his socks, which were lying uncharacteristically disorderly where he’d stripped them off. It was the dark blue pair with the little avocados.

“Shaun, please talk to me. What happened? Are you hurt?”

He closed his eyes and just shook his head silently. At least there was that.

“Here,” she held the towel out to him.

He wordlessly took it, idly clenching it in his hands, creasing and kneading it with white knuckles. Lea waited patiently—ten seconds—twenty. Clearly, this wasn’t going to work.

She got a second towel from the bathroom, the blue one that he seemed to prefer over the others and used whenever it wasn’t in the laundry. Maybe it was the softness or fiber density, or some particular smell, or maybe all of those things.

Inwardly bracing herself for rejection in form of a flinch, or a squirm, or his hands actually pushing her away, she as gingerly as she could wrapped the towel around his head and started gently rubbing his hair dry.

The most disconcerting thing was that there was no reaction from him at all. A lump formed in her stomach, filled with dread and worry and fear. What the hell had him so shaken up?

She massaged his hair a few more times, he was shivering beneath her fingers. His eyes were filled with tears, spilling over, running down his cheeks.

She stopped toweling his hair, the lump in her stomach intensifying. What? What could she do? He didn’t want to be touched, it would set him off, and—

“Shaun,” she whispered, standing in front of him. Ever so lightly, she placed her hands on his shoulders, giving them a gentle pull.

He didn’t resist, but didn’t return the gesture either. He just sagged forward, leaned into her chest, his cheek pressed against her. She held him, not too close, wordlessly rubbing her hand up and down his shoulder in small motions.

His sorrow was silent, tears streaming and eventually subsiding, and she just stood and held him, waiting for what seemed like an eternity for a sign or reaction or maybe just a miracle.

She didn’t know how long, but he eventually pushed himself away from her, his eyes nervously darting around the nothingness of the living room, his hands still gripping the towel she’d handed him.

He was still shaking, and Lea started putting the blue towel, the one she'd used to dry his hair, around his shoulders, but he wasn't having it. He pushed her gently away, and the first word he'd uttered since coming home was a barely audible, "No."

She immediately stopped, taking a step away from him, giving him the space. Consent was everything, even more so with Shaun.

"What can I do?" she asked.

He uttered another soft, "No," and got up from the chair. She watched him shuffle into his bedroom, the door clicking into its lock behind him with a finality that made the living room feel ice cold and empty.

Lea stood, the blue towel he'd pushed away still in her hands. The terry cloth was damp and cool in her fingers, and she felt very out of her depth and helpless.

What was she going to do? Leave him alone? Check on him and intrude on his personal space? Gently prod until he'd talk—or at least try?

She went up to his bedroom door, standing a few inches away, and listened. Absolute silence. She lifted her hand to rap on the door, but her fingers hovered motionlessly, inactively until she let them sink down again.

No. It was too soon. She needed give him room to breathe.

She busied herself with hanging the towel and his wet clothes in the bathroom to dry, then emptied out his backpack to salvage what she could. The medical journals were pretty banged up, the corners soaked and bent. She placed them on the dining table to dry out.

The spare shirt was uncharacteristically crumpled into a messy ball and damp in places, as was the white towel that she pulled out. A black stethoscope, a can of shaving cream, a deodorant spray bottle. It was at the very bottom of the backpack, along with a yellow highlighter and a ballpoint pen that she found what disconcerted her the most.

It was the toy scalpel, the one that Steve had given him, with the plastic blade broken clean off. She twirled both pieces in her fingers for a few long seconds, then softly set them down on the table.

The pit of her stomach was suddenly all knot and nothing else. She sagged into one of the chairs. *What the hell happened, Shaun?*

*No,* she thought. *Screw personal space.* Picking up the two pieces of the toy scalpel, she went to the bedroom door, and this time didn't hesitate to knock. "Shaun?" she said softly. "I'm coming in."

He was lying under his blanket, curled up, his hair still damp. His eyes were blank and empty. She sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Shaun, I get that you don't wanna talk, and I wish I could just let you not talk, but I found this," she held up the broken toy scalpel. "Did someone break it? Is that what has you so upset?"

He sucked in a breath, and for a long moment, she thought she'd just have to accept that he would leave her worrying the whole night without any line of communication. His voice was raspy and meek when he said, "I broke it."

“Why?”

“I… got fired.”

What? No. That… no. “You got fired from pathology?”

“Mh-mh.” It was a no.

“Then what? You got fired from St. Bonaventure?”

He nodded his head, his movements jerky.

“How?”

She knew she probably wasn’t going to get the full answer out of him tonight, but she was gonna take what she could get.

“I yelled at Dr. Han, and then he fired me.”

“O…kay. Should I be asking why you yelled at him?”

“I am a surgeon,” he said just above a whisper.

Oh no. He’d tried to get his old job back, and it had backfired. Was that it?

“I… *was* a surgeon. Now I’m not anymore.”

“No, Shaun, you are still a surgeon. A damn good one, at that, and Dr. Han is a fucking idiot not to notice that.”

“I failed.”

“No, you didn—”

“I failed,” he repeated, his voice louder, more agitated.

“Shaun. Shaun. Please don’t go there.”

“I failed,” he repeated again, and Lea knew he was working himself into one of those locked-in cycles, the ones that usually ended with some sort of crisis or meltdown.

“Shaun!” she said, her voice louder than she intended. At least it stunned him into momentary silence. “Shaun, listen to me. Yes, this seems bad, and you can tell me tomorrow what exactly happened, but let’s not get ahead of ourselves here, okay?

“It’s late, and you’re upset and overwhelmed, and exhausted. And that’s okay, that’s normal. But if you catch some sleep, I think it’ll all look a little less daunting tomorrow. Do you think you can try to get some sleep?”

There was no answer, and she let out a low sigh. “So here’s what I’m gonna do. I’m gonna sit here next to you, so that you don’t have to be alone, and I will be here tomorrow morning and we can face it together, okay? And if that’s not okay, you can tell me to leave, and I will.”

With the sparse furnishings, it wasn't hard to find a space next to the bed where she could sit and lean her back against the wall. She drew her legs in, crossed her arms on her knees and placed her chin on her arms, watching him carefully in the dim light.

He closed his eyes and didn't say anything, which told her he was okay with her being here. Minutes stretched on, and she kept sitting there, listening to his hitched breaths until they evened out.

Tomorrow would be hard and no less upsetting, but at least he wouldn't be alone.