When the Lights Go Out (And Leave You Standing in the Dark)

Posted originally on the fanfiction.lol at https://fanfiction.lol/works/1351.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	Hetero (F/M), General (non relationship-focused)
Fandoms:	Lockwood & Co. - Jonathan Stroud, Lockwood & Co. (TV)
Relationships:	Lucy Carlyle/Anthony Lockwood, Lucy Carlyle & Anthony Lockwood
Characters:	Lucy Carlyle, Anthony Lockwood, George Cubbins | George Karim
Additional Tags:	Soft, not explicitly romantic, Lucy Carlyle Needs a Hug, Anthony Lockwood Needs a Hug, Hot Chocolate, Mixture of Book and TV Canon, Minor Spoilers for TV and early books, Mentions of Panic Attacks (loosely), POV Third Person Limited, POV Alternating, 5 +1 Things, Emotional Hurt/Comfort
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2023-02-23 Completed: 2023-03-08 Words: 14,017 Chapters: 6/6

When the Lights Go Out (And Leave You Standing in the Dark)

by WaitingForMyHogwartsLetter

Summary

5 times Locklyle couldn't sleep and 1 time they could.

Featuring 2AM chats, soft "platonic" hand-holding, and enough internal dialogue to count as oversharing.

Title from "Got It In You" by BANNERS.

Notes

hi everyone, i'm trying to copy some of my works over while ao3 is down but like a dumbass, i forgot to get epubs of ALL my own fics obviously i still have my docs and everything but the tags etc are a work in progress! i'm starting with my older works first because they don't use workskins, but this is definitely a reminder to save all that code the second ao3 comes back online 😅

Disclaimer because we live in unfortunate times: No generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used in the writing of this work. The author expressly prohibits any entity from using this work for the purposes of training AI technologies to generate text, including without limitation technologies that are capable of generating works in the same style or genre as this work and computer-narrated audiobooks of this work. The author also does not consent to this work being posted on any additional archive site without express advance permission.

Chapter 1: What Lies Behind, What Stands In Front

Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Where The Shadow Ends" by BANNERS

og a/n from when i posted this on ao3 on 23/02/2023:

this is not proofread it is half two in the morning and i have class at 9. i will read through it again on the tube en route and will probably fix any grammar or spelling errors

inspired by my fifth rewatch of the tv show and the fact i started reading book 2 yesterday (i also have access to the internet and very low self control so yes i've visited the wiki and spoilered myself)

this chapter is dedicated to oak so that they can read it without having to see the other unfinished chapters on the doc as they require a hell of a lot of work and would be very unsatisfying to read. anyway this isn't an essay it's an authors note box so i'll shut up now. enjoy

Lockwood used to fall asleep in comfortable pyjamas. Long sleeves kept his arms from freezing when he preferred to sleep with them on top of the duvet. At some point after he turned eleven, he opted to sleep shirtless instead. It wasn’t as comfortable while he tried to fall asleep, but at least it meant he didn’t have to change pyjamas every time he woke up in a cold sweat.

Like tonight, for instance.

He ran a hand through his hair, attempting to catch his breath as the ceiling seemed to phase in and out of focus above him. He closed his eyes for a few seconds, opening them slowly — that was enough to get it to stop moving. Anthony attempted to sit up, using his left hand for extra support to push himself up. Not quite healed yet, the mere action of it forced a sharp intake of breath that he had to swallow to keep himself quiet. His eyes squeezed shut again, mouth set in a thin line. Slow breaths. *In.… Out.…* He eased his eyes open again and let his head rest against the head of the bed for a moment as he gathered his thoughts.

Anthony Lockwood had been used to the nightmares and the panic and the unfortunately familiar and overwhelming *dread* for almost longer than he’d even been aware of. But this… this was different. He tried shutting everyone out, to keep them safe, to keep everything separate. All that ever did was hurt them, the exact *opposite* of his intention. Ever since everything that happened with Bickerstaff and the Bone Glass, he’d been trying to stick to his word, to his promise to Lucy.

Just reckless enough.

He still wasn't 100% yet, what with the bullet wound and falling down the shaft onto the catafalque. The only reason he wasn't pretending to be completely *physically* fine was that he had zero faith in his own abilities to protect his friends if something went wrong. What if George was cornered by a Wraith and his shoulder pulled, stopping him from getting to a flare in time? What if Lucy ended up ghost-locked and he couldn't do the right move with his rapier?

There were too many 'what if's that made his mouth go dry from even the thought of them.

So Lockwood vowed to be completely open from there on out about his physical wellbeing. Well, aside from the time a flare shattered a window and he received a gash that almost ran the full length of his arm — which he still maintains was just a 'scratch', despite insisting on taking care of Lucy's similar injury that was in a much more minor form on the very same night. He didn't rush into cases without the full information because if he wasn't able to improvise as well if things went south, he'd never be able to forgive himself if something went wrong.

He suspected that Lucy and George had their own suspicions about his lack of sleep. Lockwood had been doing his best to hide it, but he'd never been a fan of makeup and the bags under his eyes were getting harder and harder to hide. If they had picked up on it, no one had mentioned anything yet, but it was only a matter of time. He was thankful that they seemingly indulged his fantasy for the time being, pretending everything was 'fine'.

God, Anthony Lockwood had been anything *but* fine for a really, *really* long time.

He hesitated at his bedroom door. Leaving his room meant walking past Jessica's and that was another thing that he really didn't want to think about tonight. It also meant he would freeze again, something that was happening more and more regularly. It wasn't ghost-lock — there wasn't an active Visitor to cause it. It was just this feeling that presented itself in the form of an increasingly noticeable pressure on his chest and an inability to move. It wasn't a full on panic attack, he knew enough about those to know the difference between that and whatever… *this* was. This had a very *unavoidable* trigger, which was only present at night, on the stairs of 35 Portland Row.

One of the only places he ever felt wholly and completely trapped. It was what Lockwood imagined his own personal hellish version of 'between a rock and a hard place' to be. Behind him, his sister's bedroom. In front of him, Jack Carver's death glow, somehow still just as luminous as it was when he first saw it. Like he *needed* the reminder that someone had died there. That someone *else* had died in this house. It got to the point where he wasn't even sure if the trace was still there, or if his mind was just playing a nasty trick on him.

He took a deep breath, hand closing around the door handle. He could sit in bed taking unsteady breaths and making fists out of even shakier hands… or he could attempt to relax with a cup of tea, or hot chocolate and a biscuit, and sit in the library with a book until the words didn't register anymore and his eyes fell shut of their own accord. It wasn't a surprise the latter sounded more appetising.

Still, it meant crossing the landing.

Lockwood closed the bedroom door behind him. He leaned against it for a moment, eyes closed, willing himself to take the next few steps. He didn't hear the creaking of a door opening upstairs, nor the subsequent click as it was carefully closed a few moments later. He finally opened his eyes and started down the stairs only to be frozen in the same place that he always was. Two steps from the top with one hand on the bannister. He swallowed thickly, staring straight ahead, but it was impossible to prevent his eyes from darting down towards the death glow in the hallway. His grip tightened on the bannister, knuckles growing white from the tension. A thread of pain worked his way up from his hand to his still-healing shoulder and if he had the ability to move, it would've made him shudder.

"Lockwood?"

He couldn't draw his eyes away.

"Lockwood?"

He barely registered her voice.

All of a sudden, his hand was warm. That didn't make sense, because his hands were *cold* and his bare feet were *cold* and even though he had pulled on a hoodie the feeling of the zipper against his bare skin was *cold, cold, cold.* Which meant his hand *wasn't* warm.

Lucy's was.

The simple action worked like an anchor, tugging his gaze away from the death glow and onto his hand on the bannister, and hers on top of it. She gave his hand a light squeeze, gently prying his fingers from around the wooden rail and taking his hand in her own instead, using it to turn him to face her. Lucy was so *gentle*, taking extra care not to tug on his injured shoulder.

Of course, the first words out of his mouth — once he regained the ability to form words, that is — were: *"Are you okay?"* Because if Lucy was out of bed, it meant she couldn't sleep, and if she couldn't sleep, that meant—

"Are you?" She countered softly. She was still standing on the landing, and with Lockwood two steps down it was just enough to balance out their height difference. He swallowed, trying to think of an answer that wouldn't make him sound like he was losing it. The last thing he wanted was for her and George to worry, although by the look on Lucy's face it was already a little too late. Concern laced her features, as she gave him a once-over, eyes darting down and then back up again as if to check for damage. Not that any of the damage would be visible, anyway.

"Can't sleep," Lockwood admitted. Too tired to lie, too tired to keep up any sort of act. That was usually why he disappeared up to his room if it had been a long case, or if he needed to process something. It was easier to do that without having to keep up appearances. Part of him knew that he didn't *have* to with them, but even after opening up about Jessica it still

seemed like a mammoth task to let his guard down too much at once. If he did that, the dam might break completely and it would be impossible for him to rebuild any sort of defence.

Lucy didn't push him, though. She just looked past him, down the stairs. "Kitchen?" She suggested, and all he could do was nod. She dropped his hand to go past, and instantly he found himself missing its warmth. It made sense though, the stairs weren't really wide enough for two people to walk completely side to side, and she probably didn't want to overstretch his arm.

What surprised him was that once she was a few steps further down, she turned back and held her hand out to him. He couldn't help but see the death glow that seemed to frame her from behind, a silhouette highlighting how small she seemed now that she was the one on the lower step. Lockwood found himself taking her hand and following her down the stairs. He couldn't help but look past her every now and then, let his eyes rest on the death glow out of some morbid habit that still made his chest grow tight no matter how much he wished it wouldn't. But it didn't matter, because every time he faltered, or felt trapped again, Lucy's hand was squeezing his again, tethering him to himself.

As soon as they were in the kitchen, he shut the door behind them. Lucy let go of his hand to busy herself with what was probably hot chocolate and Lockwood let his hand fall limply back at his side as he leaned against the door, resting his head against it. "You didn't answer my question." He remembered, and his concern for her returned now that his own problems were separated by a wooden door. He could think a little clearer with them out of sight, and his attention became wholly focused on her. "Are you okay?"

"Couldn't sleep either," she admitted, turning around with the drinks already made. Oh, he must have been leaning against the door for longer than he thought if she managed to get that done so quickly. He took that as his cue to take a seat next to her at the table. She looked at him for a moment, like she was trying to find the right words. The right words to say what, he couldn't tell just yet. "I haven't been able to since the Bone Glass."

Lockwood frowned, moving a little closer to her. "You aren't mesmerised by it, are you?"

"I didn't look directly, remember? So I can't be," she reminded him with a sigh. "And you know that spell broke when the mirror did." Lucy nursed her hot chocolate, avoiding eye contact. She rubbed her hands against the outside of the mug to warm them up a little. "But it did… show me things."

"What kind of things?" He couldn't help but push, attempt to get her to share the burden in some way. He hadn't been there when she faced the mirror — well, faced it via the Skull — mostly because he was in the middle of getting shot, but still, which meant that he had no idea what happened, other than what she and George had told him. Even then, he wouldn't be surprised if they left out one or two of the most jarring details.

She still didn't look up at him, pretending to be fascinated by the contents of her drink. "The kind of things that keep people up at night," Lucy whispered. When she looked back up at him, finally allowing their eyes to meet, he was faced with a vulnerability she rarely let him nor George see.

"Luce." His voice came out pained. Her openness let his own guard slip momentarily, and he reached for her hand on the table. "I can't say I know *exactly* what that's like… but I do understand, at least a little."

"Is that… Is that why you're awake?" Lucy looked at him again and *god,* if that didn't start to chip away at his walls in a way that only she could.

"One of the reasons." It slipped out, it hadn't meant to. Even then, it didn't give much away, but at the same time it opened up the opportunity for more questions. Questions that seemed harder and harder to lie to the closer they got to them.

"On the stairs, you…" She trailed off, either unsure of how to phrase it or unsure of what she'd seen in the first place. It was fair enough, Lockwood wasn't even completely sure what he'd experienced, let alone how to describe it in full. Not that he'd want to, not entirely at least.

It was his turn to look away, searching everywhere in the room but her face for the answer. "It happens, sometimes," he explained softly. "It's not… It's not as bad as at the auction. It's not *panic.*.. I don't… I don't know what it is."

"It doesn't happen during the day, does it?"

She was getting closer to the truth now, but he didn't make a move to stop her. "No, it doesn't."

"I thought so. I would've noticed." Her reply was so quiet, it was hard to tell if he was meant to hear it or not.

Still, Lockwood made a weak attempt to lighten the atmosphere. "Ah, and here I thought I was doing *so* well at hiding it."

"You don't have to, though," she reminded him. "With me or George. No more secrets, remember?"

For some reason, when Lockwood said that, when he let them in about Jessica's room, a part of him expected it to just… *stop.* No follow up questions, no check-ins, no treating him any differently from usual. The part of him that enjoyed being bluntly honest with him told him that his friends would never just leave it there, even if there was nothing left to tell.

"No more secrets," he echoed. "I am trying, I promise."

Lucy squeezed his hand. "I know."

They stayed in comfortable silence for a few minutes, drinking their hot chocolate and each waiting for the other to speak first. It was still comfortable, and Lockwood knew he could probably stay like this with Lucy all day if he wanted to, but there was still more to be said. No matter how much he hated saying it, and regretted building up to it.

Rip the bandaid off, get it over and done with.

“Jack Carver’s death glow is still in the hallway and I still see it every time the sun goes down despite the fact it’s been *weeks* and it really should’ve started to fade at least a little by now.” Lockwood blurted out, before he had a chance to overthink it. She opened her mouth to say something, but he cut her off, wanting to be completely finished while he still had the sleep-deprived burst of honest courage to do so. “And I don’t get claustrophobic, really, ever, but when I’m standing there on that step and I’ve got him in front and her room behind me it’s as if I’ve been ghost-locked.” There. It was out in the open. Well, that part, at least. That was just what stopped him from coming downstairs once he was already awake, but she didn’t need to know everything just yet. If he turned on that tap it ran the risk of never turning off.

She squeezed his hand again, providing just enough comfort that he didn’t regret telling her in the first place. “We’ll figure it out,” she promised. “But you’re not alone.”

“I know,” he replied softly, eyes fixed on the thinking cloth.

“I mean it, Lockwood,” Lucy repeated herself, this time a little more firmer. She cupped the side of his face with one hand, forcing their eyes to meet. “You are not alone.”

“I know,” he echoed his earlier reply, holding her gaze.

The difference was, he actually meant it that time.

Chapter 2: It's Getting Harder Now To Breathe

Chapter Summary

chapter title from “Empires on Fire” by BANNERS. Specifically the acoustic version but obviously the lyrics don’t change it’s just the vibes

written at 2am and if there are typos I haven’t clocked them yet <3

Lucy wasn’t a stranger to sleepless nights. From what she knew about George and Lockwood, they weren’t either. That didn’t mean lying awake staring at the ceiling of her loft bedroom at Portland Row was any more enjoyable than lying awake staring at the ceiling of her childhood bedroom. Aside from the fact that if she managed to make it down to the kitchen at 2AM, too tired to speak coherently but still too tired to sleep, at Portland Row she wouldn’t be yelled at for it. Her mother, on the other hand, would have some choice words on the matter.

She preferred not to dwell on what her mother would or wouldn’t do, but when the lights are off and the darkness is everywhere… It’s hard not to let one thought spiral into another and another until she’s choking back tears with her knees pulled up to her chest. It was in those fateful early morning hours when the truth blurred with the lies she’d been told and the feelings she’d spend so long bottling up and it was almost *painful.*

Because *what if* they were all right about her, back home?

What if her team died because of her?

What if the same thing was going to happen here too?

After Bickerstaff and the Bone Glass, the nights seemed a lot longer than they used to be, and the silence was all too loud to be comforting. It was almost like every time Lucy closed her eyes, she was back there.

The image of Lockwood, ghost-touched, flashed into her mind again.

Panic knotted in her chest and she attempted to swallow it down. It spread like frostbite, turning her blood to ice as it worked its way from her heart to her fingertips and left her hands shaking just enough to warrant the force she clenched them with in an attempt to calm down. It didn’t work, only succeeding in leaving angry crescent-shaped marks on her palms and a stinging sensation that accompanied them.

All it took was one look at the photos of her and Norrie. That instantly merged with the memories of the visions from the Bone Glass of her best friend ghost-locked, interspersed

with the screams of her old teammates, all the other horrific events she'd witnessed, and finally the yet to happen ghost-touched Lockwood. Lucy clamped her hands over her ears in an automatic response to the screaming, but it was futile when the cause was her own trauma.

Slowly, she removed her hands from her ears and opted for curling them tightly in the bed sheets instead. Her gaze fixated on a blank spot on the wall — currently a safer bet than what would undoubtedly return behind her eyelids as soon as they closed. Sleep was looking less and less likely, so there was really only one solution that didn't make Lucy feel like shit.

Biscuits.

Granted, she had been the last one to take one, so it would be breaking the biscuit rule… But as long as she went out and bought more first thing in the morning, it would probably be fine. Right?

It was hard to know who was awake, so she tiptoed carefully down the stairs in her socks, taking each step slowly to make sure it didn't creak. It didn't end up making a difference, if the light spilling under the kitchen door was anything to go by. She hovered on the bottom step and her eyes quickly traced over the spot where Carver had died, the event which Lockwood was forced to be reminded of every time he came down after dark. If her Sight was better, maybe she would be able to see it too.

She hesitated, briefly. Sometimes, it was easier to be alone in these hours, in the quiet hours. You could almost convince yourself that you would only be awake for five minutes — ten, maximum — and that it was probably because of a noise outside. It wasn't your own fault, it wasn't a regular occurrence. A rare inconvenience at best. This wasn't one of those times. If someone else was awake, it was proof she wasn't alone in all this.

Lucy desperately needed that proof right now.

She pushed open the door, showering the hallway in a golden glow. Lockwood was leaning over the kitchen table with his head hanging low; either fixated on something on the thinking cloth or lost to his own thoughts, it was too early to tell. His arms were almost completely straight, braced against the table in a way that made it seem as if he'd collapse without the assistance — although it wasn't hard to see that he was favouring his right arm, the left still recovering. A pencil danced between the fingers of his right hand, but it had grown still as soon as the door opened. He was still wearing his shirt and trousers but his tie was discarded on the table, still tied, and judging by the odd angle his collar was sticking out that meant that his top button was undone too.

It was pretty clear that although he disappeared upstairs after dinner, Lockwood definitely made no attempt at going to bed.

She couldn't be sure how much he'd slept in the past week — her world was distorted through the same sleep-deprived lens that it wouldn't be a stretch to assume he shared. Still, Lucy was slowly finding it easier to read him, to see beneath the cracks in his armour. Lockwood looked up, slowly, and the light made him look that much more hollow. The bags under his eyes looked exaggerated in comparison to during the day.

Despite this, he still mustered a small, uneven smile. Even if he didn't quite have the energy to. It wasn't much, but it was solely for her, and Lucy couldn't help but notice she felt a little bit less anxious because of it. "Luce, hey."

"Late night?" She asked warily, taking a few steps into the kitchen and closing the door behind her.

He sighed, wiping his forehead with the back of his left hand before bracing against the table again. He winced as soon as it made contact with the surface again and immediately tried to hide it. "Late night, early morning…" Lockwood trailed off, forcing a small laugh. "Can hardly tell the difference."

Lucy made her way over. Eyes skimming over the thinking cloth, she clocked the checklist he seemed to be working from, along with the contents of the documents strewn across the table. A rather large reminder that read "BILLS" in all caps had been underlined several times, as well as being circled in red pen — something she'd rarely seen used on the thinking cloth. "Please tell me you're not doing… taxes? At three in the morning."

"Not taxes," he chuckled. "*Far* more interesting than that." Lockwood nudged one of the pieces of paper across the table towards her. "Keeping the lights on, all the important landlord stuff that you guys don't need to deal with."

"At three in the morning?" She probed again, raising an eyebrow.

"It's very therapeutic," he lied.

"Lockwood." Lucy folded her arms. "Take a break."

"I'm almost—"

She couldn't ignore the real reason she came downstairs for much longer, so Lucy reached for the packet of biscuits and slid it towards him as she sat down. "Please?" She asked, her voice small. She couldn't be hypocritical, she couldn't coax Lockwood's secrets out of him and then hide her own when she was struggling.

Something flashed in Lockwood's expression, but it was gone before Lucy had a chance to register it. He sat down, turning the chair so it faced hers as he took a biscuit, before passing the packet back to her. "Is it the Bone Glass still?"

She took a biscuit from the pack, nibbling on it for a little comfort. "Maybe," she admitted. It didn't take much for him to work the truth out of her, but honestly Lucy wasn't sure she had the energy to fight it anyway. "Yes," she clarified. "It is. Are you still avoiding the…" She trailed off, glancing at the kitchen door.

Lockwood ducked his head, refusing to meet her eyes. "I fell asleep packing away new kit in the basement, it was dark out by the time I woke up. I just couldn't do it." His brows pulled tight, knitting together in frustration. "It's stupid, they're already dead. I don't know why I can't just… I don't know. Maybe it's punishment, because they're my fault."

“They’re absolutely not—”

“They *are* Lucy,” he whispered, squeezing his eyes shut for a second. “Just like that DEPRAC agent at Winkman’s. If I had helped Jessica like she asked me to, or if I had a more subtle plan to talk to Carver, or if I hadn’t… I hadn’t…”

“Lockwood.” Her tone was final, no arguments would hold up against it. She put her hand on top of his and interlaced their fingers. “It wasn’t your fault. You can’t keep blaming yourself for it all, it wasn’t your fault.” She sensed his hesitation, squeezed his hand again in reassurance. “Because if it was your fault, then by that logic, what happened at the Mill was mine.”

That seemed to disperse any attempt at a valid argument he had. It was harsh move to use, if a little selfish — all Lucy needed to hear someone say was that it *wasn’t her fault* — but she knew Lockwood well enough to know he would never let her take the blame for what happened. Ever since she told him the full story, about Norrie, about her team, about *Jacobs.*.. He was adamant that she did all she could.

“Of course what happened at the Mill wasn’t your fault, Jacobs—”

“Then Jessica wasn’t yours. Or Carver, or that agent,” she replied firmly. “If you doubt that, then I will keep telling you you’re wrong because there is no way I will let you beat yourself up over this for the rest of your life.” Returning to the subject of her own failures, Lucy’s voice shook a little, just a little less certain. “And if I end up thinking about… all that… Then you can talk me out of it just the same, yeah?”

She squeezed his hand again.

He squeezed hers back in silent agreement.

After a moment of no talking, just comfortable quiet, Lucy wondered out loud: “Do you think George would notice if I took another biscuit?”

Lockwood managed another small smile. “I *might* have discovered a small flaw in our rule.”

“Oh?”

He reached across the table for an empty plate, shoulder visibly tugging but he almost managed to hide his wince. *Almost.* One biscuit, and then another, made their way onto the plate. “There, George’s rotation. So he’s not missing out.” Lockwood glanced at the kitchen door, thinking of their friend upstairs. “But just to be on the safe side…” He checked his watch. “Sun’s up in about two hours, we can probably restock before he wakes up.”

Lucy smiled. “Sounds good.” An idea occurred to her, and she hesitated before presenting it. Was it a little too self-indulgent? Would it come across that way? *Would he even say yes?* “Lockwood…”

“Luce?” He caught her eye, even as she looked around the room to ease her nerves.

“If you don’t want to… If you don’t want to come *downstairs* when you can’t sleep… You can always come… *up?”* She suggested carefully, trying to gauge his response.

Lockwood blinked. Either his ability to process the information was severely impacted by his lack of sleep, or he had just buffered while trying to figure out what she was suggesting. “Up? As in… As in your room?”

“Yeah,” Lucy confirmed, a little more confidently. “If that’s weird, then we can forget I ever suggested it. But if it would help…”

“Okay,” he decided. “But what if you’re asleep?”

“We’re already both sitting at the kitchen table at half-three in the morning. Do you really think I would be?” She pointed out.

He conceded a little. “Fair enough. But are you sure you’d… *want* me to?”

“Would I have asked if I didn’t?” Lucy met his eyes again, offering the most reassuring smile she could muster. Obviously that was more Lockwood’s territory, but she hoped her own version of it could have a similar effect.

“Okay.” He nodded slowly, mirroring her smile with an even brighter one of his own. “Thank you.”

“I need this too,” she blurted out, barely thinking. “Just so you know, because I know you worry. I… Talking to you does help. And I don’t want you to think that it’s all one-sided, because it’s not. I probably could’ve phrased this a bit better, but it’s bloody three AM, so I’m not really going to try again.” Lucy looked down at her lap, where her free hand was taking comfort in fiddling with the hem of her pyjama shirt.

“You can come to me too, if you want. Whenever you want. Whenever you *need*, Luce,” Lockwood promised. “And if I’m not in my room…” He gestured to the table. “There’s not many other places I’d be.”

“Okay,” she agreed. “So that’s sorted then. If you need anything…”

“I’ll find you. And if you…”

“I’ll find you,” she promised.

A rarity, Lockwood confessed quietly: “I’m tired, Luce. I’m tired of being tired.”

“Me too,” Lucy admitted just as softly. “Want to crash on the sofa instead of going back up?”

He nodded, pushing himself up shakily onto his feet before holding out his free hand to Lucy. She took it, and he helped her to her feet. Before making a move towards the living room, however, Lockwood surprised the both of them by pulling her into a gentle hug.

“You and George are everything I never knew I needed,” he whispered.

Her arms came up around him and Lucy turned her head to one side as she hugged Lockwood back, comforted by the sound of his racing heartbeat thundering next to her ear. “I’ve been thinking the exact same thing,” she replied with a sigh.

Neither of them were okay yet, but Lucy finally let herself think that it wasn’t such a long shot to get there.

Chapter 3: Us Against The World

Chapter Summary

They need each other, they find each other. It's that simple.

Title from "Back When We Had Nothing" by BANNERS (i gather you've sensed the running theme by now lol)

Chapter Notes

You know the drill, it's 4AM this time so this isn't proof read. It could be absolutely shit for all I know, I think I'm exhausted enough to have forgotten how to read. Anyway, hope you enjoy it. I'll fix any errors in the morning... probably. Thank god for autocorrect.

Shorter chapter than usual, but it feels right.

I've got a busy few weeks ahead so I don't know when I'll have the time to write, but I promise this will get finished because I very much love this fic and I'm proud of it and I'm super grateful for all the support I've got on it so far <3 :)) thanks for reading!

Lockwood felt the cold more easily now. Well, after being shot he felt a lot of things more easily. It was as if the bullet had broken some sort of barrier, making everything that much harder to hide. Now, every time he set foot in a haunted house and the temperature started to drop, the cold seemed to burn in that hole in his shoulder and it only got worse from there. Like roots, twisting and branching, it would work its way down his arm until the very tips of his fingers almost felt numb.

It was terrifying, the thought that this could be permanent.

He had always tried to avoid thinking about it — the future. For a long time, Lockwood didn’t think he’d have one. He didn’t expect to live long enough to *need* to figure out what his next steps would be. What would be the point in planning ahead when he had a higher chance of dying before his talent faded?

Then George came into his life, followed by Lucy.

And the future didn’t seem to scare him as much anymore.

Or it did, but for very different reasons.

The cold tugged at him again, and he let his eyes fall closed briefly. British weather was always so predictably unpredictable, and the most recent cold snap seemed to aggravate everyone and everything… including the boiler at 35 Portland Row. Sleepless nights were that much harder when you could practically see your own breath misting in the air above you. They'd dolled out the extra blankets between the three of them, but that didn't make it any easier.

Lockwood had made the executive decision to lie about his own 'supply' of blankets, and even though he knew it let the others sleep soundly he couldn't help but regret it ever so slightly. And every time he moved, icy pain radiating from his shoulder, he regretted it just a little bit more.

He contemplated Lucy's offer, considered if he had the energy left in him to attempt to climb the attic stairs. It was something George had said too — off-handedly, bluntly, in a way that only he could — about the fact that he shouldn't be alone in times like this. The times where thoughts came easier than sleep did, and his mind wandered to all the things that company usually managed to keep at bay.

Like that DEPRAC agent he got—

Wasn't your fault.

Lucy's voice interrupted him before he could finish the thought, echoes of their previous conversation drowning out his guilt. Fleeting, and then it was gone, and he was left to his thoughts again. He never even got the man's name. Did his wife work? Did his family get paid compensation for their loss? Was it enough to keep the heating on when the weather got this bad? He had a daughter, too, Lockwood knew that much. Was she awake too? Kept from sleep by the chill that even the thickest of blankets couldn't keep out, wondering—

If you need anything…

Lockwood sighed. She was right, wasn't she? Lucy was always right. She was right when she told him he needed to take a break. She was right when she told him he needed to be *'just reckless enough'*.

He hated the fact that she was always right.

~~No, he didn't.~~

He swung his legs out of the bed and immediately regretted it as soon as his bare feet touched the wooden floor. It was cold enough to make him sit there for a moment, hands braced either side of him against the edge of the mattress, feet flat against the wood until the initial shock subsided. Lockwood eased himself upright, favouring his right as the fingers on his left hand tingled again. His hand shook, ever so slightly. Not enough to be noticeable, as long as he kept it moving, or kept it hidden. Just enough to have to ignore it.

Just another reminder that he was still broken.

He reached for a hoodie, pulling it on over his pyjama top with considerably less ease than he would ever be willing to admit. The socks came next — in hindsight, something he should have considered *before* getting up — and he pulled the bedside drawer open. Several ties, and one singular orange sock. The word *'laundry'* on the thinking cloth, circled three times, came to the forefront of his mind. Lockwood pinched the bridge of his nose with the fingers of his right hand, too exhausted to even consider going downstairs to check the laundry. Not past Jessica's room, or Carver's death glow.

By then, he might as well stay barefoot anyway.

There was one option, stuffed in the bottom drawer of the cabinet. Novelty socks — last year's Christmas present from George — with little rapiers stitched into them. They didn't scream *professional* in a way that would let him ever wear them outside of the house, but they worked well enough for tonight. He pulled them on without a second thought and reached for the door handle. It was already turning, and his hand froze mid-journey.

Lucy hovered in the door, caught off guard by the fact that he was already up. "Oh. I can—" She turned back towards the landing, almost as if she was scared to intrude. Lockwood almost scoffed at the thought, like she could ever do *that.* This was her idea in the first place.

"Wait," he whispered. His desperation stopped her from leaving, a hand reaching out for hers and gently catching her wrist instead. "Please stay." He swallowed thickly, it wasn't embarrassment but *nerves* that left his voice unsteady as he asked her. He attempted a weak joke to ease the tension. "You'd be saving me the trip."

"Oh," she repeated, finally getting it. "You were about to…"

Lockwood's gaze dropped as he tried to hide his uncertainty. "Is that a problem?"

"Of course not," Lucy replied firmly. She took a step further inside, and closed the door softly behind herself with a click.

He looked back up at her, his hand sliding down a fraction so that he was grasping her hand instead of her wrist. Her eyes seemed to follow the movement with the softest of smiles accompanying the gesture. Lockwood could've sworn the room grew a little warmer because of it. "Can't sleep?" He asked gently, tiptoeing around the subject just in case.

Lucy shook her head, avoiding speaking it into existence straight away. She looked back at the door one last time before taking a step closer to him. Warmth seemed to radiate off her in waves — must've been from the extra blankets. "You too?"

Lockwood offered a tired smile in place of an answer. It said everything that he couldn't put into words and with a light tug of their joined hands, Lucy was pulling him close. It caught him off guard, but he couldn't help but melt into her. His good arm came up to cup the back of her head tenderly, while his still-healing one curled around her back to tug her closer. They didn't do this often. It was a rarity, but he made sure to savour every moment of it. During the day, they weren't as exposed.

It didn't matter though, because she was here now.

His lips brushed over the top of her head gently and Lockwood could smelt the faintest hint of lavender from her shampoo. His eyes fluttered closed and they stood there, unwavering, clinging to each other as time seemed to slow down. He didn't want to end, and yet…

"You should get some rest," he mumbled into her hair.

Lucy's head shifted slightly — a nod — but she didn't pull away just yet. "So should you."

He let out a weak exhale. "Luce, I—"

She cut him off, pulling away slightly. He already missed her warmth. "Have been lying for the past two days about having a secret stockpile of blankets?"

Shit. She levelled him with such a no-nonsense look Lockwood couldn't even stumble through a half-asleep attempt at an explanation. Instead, all that came out was an incredibly undignified: *"Busted…"* as he closed his eyes to hide from her judgemental gaze.

Lockwood prided himself in his ability to seem put-together, composed, relaxed. It put others at ease, and it was one of those vital parts of being a *leader.* The last few weeks had felt like clutching at straws, weighed down by the lack of immediate progress with his injuries. He wasn't up for big cases yet, and it had been a unanimous decision to enforce that. He didn't trust *himself* not to forget his own limits if he saw George or Lucy in danger, despite how much he trusted them. But just because he couldn't help didn't mean they didn't need the money, which left him waiting up at the kitchen table feeling *useless* and *helpless* until they came back.

They needed the extra blankets more than he did, they were doing most of the work anyway.

It seemed like a good idea at the *time.*

He just wanted to feel useful, like he was making their lives just a little bit easier.

Lucy sighed. He didn't open his eyes yet, but it was comforting that she still hadn't let go of his hand even when she pulled away. Her thumb brushed over the back of his hand with a featherlight touch. It was as an anchor point, and even when Lockwood finally opened his eyes again it was the first place his gaze fell. "You don't need to do that, you know," she whispered.

"I'm not exactly good for much else right now, am I?" The joke — was it even a joke at this point? — fell flat, and the silence it left behind was almost deafening.

She didn't say anything, at first. It was fair enough, Lockwood wasn't sure what to say either. Instead, she tugged him towards the bed and climbed in. Too tired to argue, he settled down next to her and let Lucy pull the covers up over both of them. His hoodie was discarded out of the side of the bed, the zip too cold to be welcome as he followed her lead and let his arm curl around her, pulling her back flush against his chest. *Warmth.* Every time it almost caught him off guard, probably because of the cool colours she wore — he never would've guessed she'd run this warm. Then again, she was fiery at the best of times, so it kind of made sense.

“Lockwood?” She whispered, finding his hand and parting his fingers with her own until they slotted together comfortably.

“Hmm?” He could feel himself getting pulled into sleep already, Lucy’s presence more than enough to keep everything else at bay.

“You’re enough,” she promised. “For me and George. You don’t have to do anything else. You’re already enough.”

He could feel the small smile making its way onto his face. He believed it, from her. “Thanks, Luce.” Something cold pressed against his ankle, but instead of shiver Lockwood let out a soft laugh instead. Of course her feet would be the only part of her that was cold. “Your feet are *freezing.*”

“They’d be warmer if you had a blanket in here,” she pointed out matter-of-factly. *Always right.*

He couldn’t help but grin now, as Lucy nestled her head into the crook of his neck. “You should’ve brought one then.”

“Shut up,” she retorted, attempting to scowl. Lockwood didn’t need to see her face to know the exact expression that sat there, and there was no real heat behind it. “I didn’t think that far ahead.”

“‘S fine,” he mumbled, smiling into her hair. “Too late now. I’ll have to do.”

“Yeah, something—” She interrupted herself with a yawn— “Something like that.”

“Luce?”

“Hmm?”

She nestled in closer to him, and Lockwood almost forgot what he was going to say. *Almost.*

“Go to sleep,” he murmured, his own eyes already closed.

“Okay,” Lucy conceded. “Night Lockwood.”

“Goodnight, Luce.”

And for the first time in a while, it actually *was* a good night.

Chapter 4: I Was The Darkness, You Were The Light

Chapter Summary

Title from "Supercollide" by BANNERS.

Lucy's not been coping as well as she thought, and it's impossible to hide now.

Chapter Notes

actually finished this at 4am and then i saw the chapter title box and promptly fell asleep. so yeah, i'm still probably not going to be coherent enough to proof read this first thing when i wake up, but at least it'll have a chapter title then.

update: i slept until like 10AM?? had to shift my meds schedule but oh well. still haven't proofread this, still in pjs, but hey! at least it has a title :)

Falling.

Everyone says they've had that dream at least once, endlessly falling into a dark abyss. Lucy had never experienced it herself, but she came close to living it, once, with the well at Combe Carey Hall. It felt nothing like this, like right now.

Falling, to Lucy, was like hurtling at full speed with no brakes towards a point she desperately, *desperately* did not want to reach.

Because if every other thing she'd seen when she used the Skull to look in the Bone Glass had been true… What did that mean for Lockwood? *Ghost-touched,* her mind supplied for her, and she choked back a sob. *No.* He wasn't allowed to die. He *couldn't.*

She swallowed it down, looking at the mop of dark hair on the pillow next to her. Lockwood was asleep, for once. He'd come in at some point around two in the morning and quietly slipped into the bed next to her, either too tired to talk about it or too wrecked to want to. Lucy understood that, more than she'd ever let on. It had become routine now, and neither of them seemed to want to question it. If she needed him, she'd find him, and vice versa.

She waited for a second, in the dark, watching the steady rise and fall of his chest beneath the duvet. Lockwood couldn't know the full extent of the dreams, the visions, any of it. He'd worry too much, because that's just *who he is.* He had enough on his plate already with everything he'd been through — not to mention the ongoing Golden Blade investigation that

forced him to constantly think about his parents. She'd tell him, eventually. Lucy promised herself she would.

But not just yet, not while he was still recovering. Not until she'd had a chance to have a *proper* conversation with him about his recklessness. One that wasn't rushed because of a life or death situation. *Just reckless enough* worked, but it wasn't as reassuring as it could be. Not while the image of him being ghost-touched was still fresh in her mind.

Lucy couldn't help but let her mind wander back to that night at Winkman's. The first time, in which Lockwood pleaded — no, *begged* — for her to be spared, and for them to kill him instead. She hadn't been conscious for most of the exchange, but the moments she *had* heard could almost be played on repeat, beat for beat. There was no erasing them from her memory, just like there was no way to get rid of the sound of Paul's screams at the Mill, or George's tortured words about being the one who would always be left alone, or… or…

Or the way Lockwood's voice shook, just a little, when he told her no one would have cared if he was found at the bottom of the thames.

Her heart broke for all of them, in every moment, in every beat. It didn't matter that she'd tried to close herself off after leaving home, patch up the cracks left behind by her old team. Lockwood and George worked their way into her heart and slotted themselves into the available space until she finally started to heal. They made her feel safe, they made Portland Row feel like *home.*

She couldn't lose them.

The dreams had been coming and going in waves, and Lucy wished this was one of the better nights. She always did, but it never changed anything. Sometimes she couldn't even remember the dreams themselves, just the deep-rooted dread that seemed to suffocate her afterwards. The new normal, now, was to get up and go to Lockwood's room. Or run into him on the stairs, which was just as likely. Tonight she got lucky; he was already next to her.

But something was different. Something stopped her from reaching for him, from seeking the reassurance she so *desperately* craved to combat the hollow chill of despair that had her in a chokehold. The usual fear was still there — even awake, the nightmares had an unwavering hold on her for as long as it was dark outside — but there was something else too. It wasn't ghost-lock, not like when she'd inadvertently let Annabelle Ward into her bedroom. No, it was definitely something of her own doing, which made it that much worse.

Lucy swallowed another sob but it was just getting to be *too much.*

One of her hands was clamped tightly around the blanket, but the other wasn't so lucky. She barely noticed as her fingernails bit into the skin, slotting into the familiar indents that this method of coping had left in her palms time and time again. Silent tears shook her body and she squeezed her eyes shut in an attempt to get them to subside.

Naturally, she felt Lockwood before she saw him. Felt his hand on hers, gently slipping his fingers between hers so she was gripping onto him instead of herself. Felt his arm come around her from behind, pulling her into him so her head was against his chest. Felt his lips

ghost over the top of her head as he whispered quiet reassurances into her hair. Lucy couldn't hear most of them, couldn't *focus* on much of it, but she caught snippets here and there.

I've got you.

You're okay.

I'm here.

You're safe.

He was trying to console her, and it was helping for the most part — just his presence was enough to steer her away from the edge — but it wasn't herself she was worried about. Lucy was safe, she knew that, she could feel it in the way his arms held her protectively. Lockwood would never let anything happen to her, and *that* was what terrified her the most. She was safe. *But what if he wasn't?*

She barely realised she'd said some semblance of those words out loud, but the shift in his body language instantly clued her on. He had grown still on the outside, but next to her head his heart seemed as if it was preparing to fight to escape through his chest.

"Lucy." His voice cracked a little, as if he was fighting tears of his own. "Is that— Is this about me?"

She squeezed his hand, once, hoping that was answer enough. A shaky exhale left his lips in response, fluttering a few wayward strands of her hair. She'd never known him to take so long to collect himself before speaking.

It was worth the wait.

When Lockwood pulled away, his own eyes misted up just a little, Lucy wasn't sure what to think. Her breath still caught in her throat and she hated that she'd managed to wake him, let alone *hurt* him—

"I'm not going anywhere," he whispered, with as much finality as he seemed capable of mustering. His eyes locked onto hers, driving the message home even further before he rested his forehead against hers. It was almost reminiscent of the auction, but Lucy was trying not to think about anything other than *this moment* because it seemed to be the only thing tethering her to reality. One of his hands gently came up to cup her face, drawing her attention back to him.

She couldn't think of a time where anyone had ever held her so tenderly.

His eyes fluttered closed, lips parted ever-so-slightly as he took a shaky breath. *"I. Promise."*

And just like that, the dam broke again.

Lucy sobbed until her lungs burned. Until her breaths came out in choked gasps and her eyes were blotchy and raw. Until there was nothing left to give. Through it all, he held her.

Lockwood was steady, even though it was clear that her pain was hurting him almost as much as it was her. She could tell by the way a few stray tears landed on their joined hands, from too awkward an angle to have come from her.

It was impossible to tell how much time had passed, but at some point Lockwood had leaned back and eased her with him. Lucy slotted under his arm perfectly, letting him pull her closer with it as she rested her head on his chest. All the while, he kept hold of her hand. The moment could stretch on way past the sunrise and she'd be content with that, but the knot in her chest wasn't gone just yet.

There was only so long she could shut him out for, and if tonight was anything to go by… It wasn't doing her any favours. Lockwood hadn't pushed her to say anything, but she didn't need to look up at him to see the worry creasing his face. The streetlamp outside her window cast a soft green glow over his features and for a moment she could almost imagine they were somewhere else, somewhere easier and a little less terrifying.

Lucy had no idea where that would be, but it was a nice thought to entertain. Even if it was only briefly.

"One of the…" Her voice was hoarse from disuse, scratchy and dry from all the crying. "When the Skull looked into the mirror…" She trailed off again; how the hell was she supposed to start?

Lockwood squeezed her hand lightly once more in reassurance, and she found herself looking away from him to see if it made the subject any easier to tackle.

It didn't.

"There have never been that many people who cared about me," she started quietly, unsure of herself. But where else to work from than the beginning? "Or that I cared about. My dad… He drank himself to death, the bastard. I don't think my mum ever forgave him for it either. Neither of them cared about me, not unless I could make them money. Not even when I was grieving some of the only friends I'd ever had. I took my first three grades with that team, they felt like *family.*.. And then they were gone.

"And then *you* came along, you and George. And you reminded me what it felt like to have someone watching my back, making sure I got home safe. More than that, you *gave* me a home. But I've never been able to hold on to good things for very long, so I think I started waiting for the other shoe to drop." She swallowed thickly, trying to keep going. "And then we almost lost George because of Joplin and that bloody Bone Glass, and then we almost lost *you* because of that tosser who brought a gun to a rapier fight…" Lucy trailed off again, clutching his hand just a little tighter in an attempt to will herself into continuing. "When I saw those visions, I thought they were memories. But they couldn't have all been memories, because before I passed out I saw something that *hasn't* happened yet. *That's* one of the things that keeps me up at night."

"Me?" He asked quietly.

“Ghost-touched,” Lucy filled in the final blanks. “And as far as I know, I can’t do anything about it. It *haunts* me, Lockwood. It’s not even a far away possibility and that *terrifies* me. I was scared that telling you… telling you would make it *real*. Like it would become some sort of self-fulfilling prophecy or something.”

Lockwood let out a slow, unsteady breath. “I’ll be careful, I swear,” he promised again. Lucy wished she could believe him completely. “I *will*. I’ll even…” He trailed off, making a weak attempt at lightening the mood. “I’ll even look both ways when crossing the street!”

She pulled a face, exasperated. Still, somehow he managed to help the weight lift just a little bit. “If you haven’t already been doing that I’m actually disappointed in you.”

“It adds excitement?” He suggested half-heartedly, and she scoffed in disbelief.

“Yeah, like we need more of *that* in our lives.”

Somehow, telling him had helped a little. The knot had loosened enough to breathe again, and her smile didn’t need as much effort put into it as before. It all just felt a little bit easier because of it.

“I mean it, Luce,” Lockwood steered the conversation back, his voice low. “I won’t put myself at risk. On purpose, at least. And if I do it accidentally… I trust you to reel me back in before I get too far ahead of myself. Does that work?”

She nodded slowly. “Yeah, I think I already do that. Just make sure you *actually* listen?”

He chuckled, pressing his lips to the top of her head again. His next words were muffled by her hair, but she understood them all the same. “Yeah, I will.” A beat, and then: “I told you I’m not going anywhere. Now you just have to let me prove it.”

“Okay.” Lucy sighed. “I do believe you, though.” She closed her eyes and stayed leaning against him, reassured by the steady thrum of his heartbeat next to her. Still, sleep didn’t come just yet. “What time is it?”

Lockwood glanced up at the clock. “Just gone five.”

“The sun’ll be up soon,” she noted.

“But we don’t have to be,” he pointed out.

Lucy nestled in closer under his arm. “You’re right,” she hummed. “We don’t have to be.”

He dropped her hand momentarily to rearrange the duvet around them, to pull it back up from where it had slipped partially off the side of the bed at some point earlier. Slowly and methodically, Lockwood tucked the edges around her, and then himself, before using his now free hand to brush a stray piece of hair out of her face. “Goodnight, Lucy,” he whispered, eyes fluttering closed.

If he noticed her leaning into his delicate touch, he didn’t mention it.

“Goodnight, Lockwood.”

Chapter 5: In The Dead Of The Night, You Were My Guiding Light

Chapter Summary

> "Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light." - Albus Dumbledore.
>
> Look, I fucking despise JKR but that's such a powerful line and it applies here.
>
> Essentially, before I get too sappy about it, sometimes you're so wrapped up in your own darkness you don't see what's right in front of you. Sometimes you just need someone else to care enough to turn on the light instead.
>
> Chapter title from "Too Soon" by BANNERS! fucking love this guy AND the fact that he references lights and darkness in over half of his songs because it makes chapter titles really easy to find

Chapter Notes

> don't worry, just because I'm publishing at 11am doesn't mean i didn't finish this at 4am. I have a brand to uphold here
>
> anyway, we're on the home stretch now folks <3 your faves are healing in this chapter and we love to see it

It was hard to tell what time it was when he woke up. Mainly because there was someone in the way of Lockwood's view of the small clock that sat on his other bedside table. Not that he minded, since the 'someone' in question was the one and only Lucy Carlyle. One of her arms was thrown over his chest almost protectively, as if she was trying to shield him from harm even while they were both asleep. Her other arm was tucked underneath her in a way that *couldn't* be comfortable in any sense of the word, but she didn't seem to notice. It wasn't the first time he'd woken up like this, and it was beginning to happen more often than it didn't.

Not that you would ever catch him complaining.

To say that he'd slept well up until that point would be an understatement. The fact that he'd managed to *sleep* was an achievement in itself. The problems weren't gone, it wasn't like he'd just put a Lucy-shaped bandage over the source of all his anxiety and called it a day.

Lockwood still couldn’t sleep through the night, not in less than three goes at least, but he was out for long enough that he didn’t have to count the hours between getting into bed and getting out of it again. No, the problems were definitely not *gone*.

But she made everything just a little more bearable, just by existing in such close proximity to him.

Still asleep, another of her quiet breaths ghosted across his collarbone.

And what a close proximity that was.

It had been a week since she’d broken down and told him the full reason she couldn’t sleep. Lockwood knew how much she blamed herself for everything that happened at her old agency, no matter how much he tried to persuade her otherwise. And she’d already let slip one night about the Bone Glass, but never the full story. *Him.* His safety, his life, his worth to her. Lockwood had been trying to wrap his head around it for seven days now. After his family died, he never expected *anyone* to care about him so much they’d lose sleep over it. Nor did he think he’d ever *want* anyone to care that much. Or vice versa.

He’d cared to that extent before, and he’d suffered because of it. Caring meant it hurt that much more when they left. It meant sleepless nights and tears and heartache and unanswered questions. He’d spent nights wide awake thinking, wishing, *praying* that it was a nightmare that he could wake up from. Wake up back in a world where he still had a family, where things made *sense*.

He was old enough to know now that he couldn’t go back to that time, even if he wanted to.

But he was also old enough to know now that it didn’t mean it was a one-off, his only chance at happiness.

Because Lucy had her arm thrown across his chest still, protective even if she wasn’t aware of it, and that made sense to him in a way that lifted a weight he’d become so used to carrying, he’d almost forgotten that it was there in the first place.

He wasn’t the only one that had lost someone before. She knew how he felt, she knew the risks of caring that much. Lucy was aware of what she was walking into and yet she opened herself up to it again anyway. Not only did she do that, she also made it abundantly clear to him that she wouldn’t stop caring about him, and neither would George.

And he’d do anything for them. Hell, he’d *live* for them. They made him *want* to live for them.

Lucy managed to show him a part of himself that he could’ve sworn died along with his parents and Jessica. It wasn't gone permanently after all, it had just gone quiet, gone dark for a little while.

All it needed was for someone to turn on the light.

He turned on his side a little, eyes sparkling as he looked at her.

Lockwood didn't need to wake up from this. He didn't *want* to anymore. This world was the one he was stuck with, and even though he missed the way things used to be he also couldn't imagine what it would be like if that had changed where he ended up right now. It wasn't a nightmare anymore. He had a family again.

Lucy's eyelids fluttered. *Dreaming?* No, *waking.* She stirred, unconsciously drifting closer to him before she fully opened her eyes and looked up at him. Instantly her brows knitted together in concern. "Awake?"

"Just thinking," he reassured her quickly. "I'm okay, I promise. Are you?"

She nodded lightly. "I think so," she hummed. "I don't—" Lucy interrupted herself with a yawn— "I don't think my body's used to actually getting more than four hours of sleep in one go. I think it finds it unsettling, so it wakes me up even if there's not a nightmare." She rolled over, pulling a face when she realised her arm had been trapped underneath her for the last few hours.

His heart did a somersault.

"You think it'll get over that eventually and let you sleep?" He propped his head up on one hand against the pillow.

"Maybe, as soon as it cottons on to the fact that sometimes comfortable is a good thing," Lucy replied with a shrug, propping herself up to mirror his position. "You know? Like just because there's calm doesn't mean I'm about to get decked by a storm."

"Yeah." Lockwood smiled. "I know what you mean."

She sighed. "Well that's me done for now, I'll probably try and go back to sleep in a bit. No point in trying again straight away."

"Want some hot chocolate in the meantime?" He barely registered the words until they were already out of his mouth, the suggestion surprising even himself. He knew what that meant. *She* knew what that meant.

Lucy blinked, caught off guard. "But that would mean going downstairs."

"Yes," he replied slowly. "Yes, it would."

And downstairs means the *stairs* and *Carver* and *Jessica* and the things he liked to avoid thinking about on the days where treading water wasn't enough to keep him from being pulled down by the tide of grief.

"Are you sure?" She looked at him carefully, eyes scanning over his face for even the slightest flicker of doubt. He didn't give one.

"Yes." *Maybe.* The truth was, he hadn't needed to face that particular fear since their comfortable arrangement of bed-sharing started. On the days where they didn't get back home until after nightfall, he just let Lucy lead him by the hand again like she did on that first night, tugging him gently up the stairs until they were outside his room. Then she would

leave and go to her own bedroom, but sometimes he found himself wishing they'd just save time and start the night out in the same bed for once. Maybe then they might actually get a full night's sleep. Or day's sleep, depending on what time they got back.

Lucy sat up a little, her mind made up. "Okay. If you're sure." She reached over for his sock drawer and pulled out a pair to borrow. "What?" Her eyes locked with his as she caught him watching her, a soft amused smile settling on his face almost without him realising.

"I didn't say anything," he whispered.

"It's cold downstairs," she attempted to justify it further. "I can grab you a pair if you want."

"Well they *are* my socks," he teased. "But I'll be fine. Thank you, though."

But she wasn't looking at him, she was turning his socks over in her hands and even though Lockwood had no need to be embarrassed, he felt his face heating up as soon as he clocked why she was so interested in what he'd assumed was just a boring pair of socks.

It was, in fact, the only *not* boring pair of socks he owned.

"Lockwood, do these have…" Lucy almost looked mystified by them, and he couldn't blame her. He had absolutely no idea where George found them either. "Do these have *tiny rapiers* on them?"

He ducked his head, trying not to laugh. "...Possibly?"

"They're adorable!" She burst out laughing. "Oh my god, they're perfect. Where did you even get them?"

"Christmas present from George," he admitted with a laugh. "He'll probably get you a pair this year. He's cornered a very niche market of Christmas gifts and he's adamant that I'm not allowed to step on his toes."

"I can see why." She separated the socks and put them on, grinning. "He's sitting on a goldmine."

"So I keep telling him," he joked. The socks suited her, actually. Not that it was hard for anyone *not* to suit socks, considering they were socks, but still. The heels came up a little bit too far since Lucy's feet were a few sizes smaller than his, but he almost wouldn't have minded if she'd kept them for herself when they came back to bed.

Well, George would've minded, but it wasn't like he couldn't retrieve them after the laundry was done if he really wanted to.

Lucy stood up, surprising him by making her way around to his side of the bed. "Are we really doing this?"

"Yeah, we are," he agreed.

She held out a hand to help pull him off the bed. "Come on, then."

Lockwood took it gratefully, intertwining their fingers and in doing so strengthening the tether between them to keep her within reach when he faced his fears. She squeezed his hand reassuringly, and let him take the lead out of the room.

The stairs were a mammoth task, one that he never would've been brave enough to face on his own. Carver in front, Jessica behind. *Trapped,* his mind supplied.

Lucy squeezed his hand again. *Safe,* he corrected himself.

Carver's death glow drew his eyes to it like a magnet. It almost seemed as if the longer he looked at it, the brighter it became. *Logically,* he knew that was impossible. But logic didn't really come into play here.

He wasn't really sure where all that confidence had come from. Maybe it was just unfounded bravado, his usual mask returned for self-preservation. He was fine. *Liar.* Everything was fine. *Liar.*

Lucy's grip on his hand loosened, and he turned around to see why. She was pulling away slowly, but her other hand had moved to his good shoulder to keep him anchored. "Can you do something for me?" She asked softly.

Lockwood found himself nodding slowly, his gaze fixed on her. "Name it," he replied breathlessly.

"Wait here? And… and close your eyes?" She suggested.

He wasn't sure why, but he nodded again. "Okay." He closed his eyes and it was barely a second before he felt her guiding his hand to the bannister for stability before she brushed past him and padded down the stairs in his socks. He almost let his eyes open again — the death glow was just about visible beneath his eyelids, like when you're trying to shut out the sun first thing in the morning — but she told him to wait, so he waited.

It seemed like forever.

It was only two minutes.

When she returned, he heard her on the stairs. His eyes stayed shut, just like she'd asked, and it was an unfamiliar sensation to be the one hearing but not seeing. His Sight was his only Talent, it was almost impossible to picture anything else. Lucy tapped him on the shoulder, coaxing his hand away from the bannister and slipping it into hers.

"You can open your eyes now," she told him quietly.

The staircase filled with light. The lamps on the floors between had been all turned on, the lights overheard cast a golden glow over Lucy and out of the corner of his eye he could see the kitchen door was wide open, its own lighting spilling out into the hallway.

Electric lights dampen the senses. That's why they turn their torches off before assessing a haunting. It was so simple, yet somehow he never would've thought of it on his own.

“I turned on the lights,” she supplied, even though that much was evident already.

“You turned on the lights,” he repeated, almost in a daze. “Is it that simple?” Lockwood could almost laugh as he turned around to look for Carver’s death glow. The combination of lights had almost completely hidden it, save for a faint wispy outline that could easily be overlooked if you didn’t know it was there. He knew it was there, but it was easier to ignore now. Now it was just Jessica’s room to deal with, but he felt a hell of a lot less trapped than before.

“If it has to be, then yeah. It’s that simple. I know this doesn’t help with—”

Lockwood cut her off. He didn’t *mean* to. He just threw his arms around her and the action managed to stun her into silence. Once again they’d found themselves at the perfect height, with him two steps down and just enough to balance it out. “Thank you,” he whispered. *For everything.*

“Anytime.” She reached up to reciprocate the hug, having finally found her voice again. She squeezed him tightly.

All it needed was for someone to turn on the light.

“No, seriously Luce. *Thank you,”* he insisted. “Even if it *is* going to cost us a fortune in electricity bills,” he attempted to joke.

He didn’t need to see her face to know she was rolling her eyes at him. “Just take it out of my wages,” she replied nonchalantly, as if she didn’t care as long as it helped. Lockwood wondered if she had any idea how much that meant to him.

When he finally pulled away, he was still a little awestruck. The words slipped out of his mouth almost as soon as he’d thought of them, and they took him by surprise. “You’re brilliant. You know that, right?”

Her gaze dropped ever-so-slightly, avoiding eye contact as she fought against a small smile. “Yeah,” she joked, before looking back up at him again. “I’m a real *asset.”*

Lockwood winced, wrinkling his nose. “Yeah, I know, you’re never letting me forget that.”

“Never,” she teased, squeezing his hand the moment she found it with hers again.

He would expect no less.

Chapter 6: The Dark Won’t Last Forever

Chapter Summary

"Order restored! We wanted to make sure you weren't skipped :)" - L & L

the thinking cloth as a plot device (as well as the show's use of fortune cookies as a plot device, which isn't in this fic but it deserves a special mention all the same) is iconic and one of my favourite things

title from "Always Yours" by BANNERS (shocker)

Chapter Notes

surprise! POV shift!!!

this is the final chapter and i'm so excited to share it with you :) thanks for coming on this little sleep deprived journey with me!

George Casper Karim was no *fool*, okay?

He knew exactly what had been going on at 35 Portland Row these past few months. Lockwood and Lucy probably thought they were being *so* subtle. Well, George was a much lighter sleeper than he let on. (He valued his sleep and it made them think twice about waking him up for trivial matters that weren’t *actual* emergencies.) He could hear them having quiet conversations on the landing outside his door. He could hear them moving about up and down the stairs to and from the attic enough times to have to stop counting.

George had always been aware of Lockwood’s somewhat strained (read: incredibly unhealthy and borderline concerning) relationship with sleep. He’d picked up on it less than two weeks after moving in, when he heard the pacing inside the room across the hall — Lockwood’s room. At first, he wasn’t sure how to bring it up… but then it stopped, so George assumed it had got a little better.

It hadn’t; he’d moved to the library in an attempt to make less noise.

He was grateful for his own ability to sleep through the night, but that wasn’t always the case. Everyone has an off night every once in a while, right? It was usually after a near-miss in a case, when Lockwood had damn near given him a heart attack by doing something he

definitely should have considered as Plan *G* rather than Plan A. But it hit a little harder on those nights, because he wasn't as used to it.

Sometimes, George wondered how Lockwood managed to cope. How he managed to come downstairs in the morning with the same smile on his face even though he'd probably got less than three hours of sleep in the space of a week. Maybe he was ever-so-slightly in awe of Lockwood's ability to look so put-together. Not that he'd ever tell him that, of course. There was no way in hell he was going to enable this stupid façade of 'fine'.

And then Lucy walked through their front door.

She changed him.

At first it was unnerving, that this new girl had managed to do in a few months what George had been trying for over a year. She got Lockwood to think things through more, to resist the impulse to throw himself headlong into situations and actually *wait* until they had all the information. George was a little put-out at that, if he was being honest. What had she tried that he didn't? He got over it though, eventually, because it was for the better.

Because it made *Lockwood* better.

He could see it in the way his eye bags were less pronounced in the mornings after he'd spent the night talking to Lucy. They weren't gone yet — *that* would be wishful thinking — but they weren't as dark as they used to be, and that made him seem a little more alive.

With Lucy, it was harder to get a read on her. George hadn't known her as long, but he could tell she struggled with things, and that she didn't feel comfortable sharing them yet. He didn't blame her, but he *did* have to fight his urge to do some background research on her when she first arrived. (Especially after she purposefully omitted the fact that she didn't have her Grade Four yet.) Still, he didn't have to fight *that* hard… He respected her privacy, because he just respected her in general.

She didn't take shit from anyone, and he got that impression clear as day from her job interview. Maybe he had got the wrong side of her at first, but George had never been happier to have Lockwood ignore his advice because if they'd fired Lucy he wasn't sure if he'd still be alive. If everything had happened with the Bone Glass and Bickerstaff and she hadn't been there? Lockwood and Co would probably have just ceased to exist.

Then she opened up to him about her previous employment, and as soon as George realised she hadn't actually told *Lockwood* those things yet, he felt weirdly protective of her. Even more so after she didn't shut him down about his theories on the Problem, which made her the only person other than Lockwood to actually make a point of listening to his research-driven rambles.

But once George knew what had happened, even if it wasn't the specifics, he slowly picked up on the signs that she'd been trying to hide. The bags under her eyes weren't as bad as Lockwood's, but they weren't looking all that healthy either. Sometimes she got that faraway look in her eye, like she wanted to be somewhere else. Eventually she caved and admitted that she didn't want to be anywhere else, she just wished she could introduce "her boys"

(something about the way she said that made him want to hug her, and he very rarely got that urge about anyone) to someone that would be there if they could. He didn't push her on the subject, but if he found her sitting at the kitchen table lost in thought after two in the morning, George would always top up her tea and offer her another biscuit.

They'd met more than once like that, but it was probably nowhere near as often as she'd encountered Lockwood in the same situation.

He picked up on it immediately the first time his friends slept together. Okay, *definitely* the wrong choice of words, because he knew they definitely didn't do *that.* (Thin walls, a characteristic of Portland Row that he found out about when Lockwood spent four months in a depressing music phase last year. There's something incredibly eerie about being able to hear the vocalists through the shared wall more easily than under the door.) It was probably only a matter of time until they did do something along those lines, but George was surprised to find that he wasn't worried. At first he was a little concerned once he picked up on the longing looks and general touchy-feeliness, but then Lucy came to rescue him from Joplin and said all those nice things about him, and he realised that even though they'd been a little wrapped up in not acknowledging the whole 'will they, won't they?' vibe they had going on, they still dropped everything to be there for him when it mattered.

It was a lot of things that made him feel like he was appreciated, but Lucy's speech definitely summed it up for him. And he wanted what was best for her and Lockwood. He wanted them to be happy and not insufferably pining all the damn time. Social cues had never been his forte, but even *he* picked up on what was going on between them before they did, and that was saying something.

Seriously, a large flashing sign would've been more subtle than the heart eyes George was subjected to any time he was in the same room as them.

Anyway, George had picked up on it the morning after they'd shared a bed. (Marginally better, but there had to be a more comfortable way of phrasing out there *somewhere.)* For one, Lockwood had *slid* into the kitchen the next morning.

Slid.

Across the *floor.*

In his *socks.*

He'd leaned against the counter like it wasn't the most out-of-character thing for him to be able to string a full sentence together first thing in the morning, and asked brightly: *"Those extra blankets treating you alright, Georgie?"*

He'd fought the urge to reply with, "That depends. Is Lucy treating *you* alright, Lockwood?" just to see his reaction. Miraculously, George managed to exhibit self-restraint with that comment. Mostly because he wanted to see where this would go next, and he liked the fact that Lockwood seemed like he had a little bit more of a reason to wake up in the mornings.

The difference in Lucy was just as noticeable. At first, it was subtle, but then one morning she came downstairs in a very un-Lucy-like way — he had figured out very quickly that she wasn't a morning person — and ruffled his hair before she sat down for breakfast. *"Morning, George. Do you want to go to the archives today?"*

She *ruffled* his *hair.*

It was strange, and the slightly less weathered versions of their personalities took a bit of getting used to, but his friends were *happy,* and they were well on their way to being healthy too, which he never would've expected to happen so fast.

All in all, it was a very promising development.

(Even if they hadn't got their shit together yet and actually *got together.* There was only so much progress George could hope for in one go.)

Tonight, it wasn't so much that George *couldn't* sleep… It was more down to the fact that he'd been thumbing through papers again related to their most recent case, slowly losing his grip on time. When he sat down at his desk, it was barely eleven o'clock. *Now,* his clock read 03:27, and he wasn't sure where the time had gone.

One thing he *was* sure of, however, was that twenty-seven minutes past three in the morning was now deemed 'biscuit o'clock'.

Because it was twenty-seven past three AM, and he *really* fancied a biscuit.

The light was on in the kitchen, which was unusual. It had to be Lucy's doing — Lockwood was anal enough about bills as it was, he probably wouldn't have left it on himself. Still, it suited George just fine, because it meant he didn't need to stumble around in the dark blindly reaching for the switch. He almost didn't notice the small plate that was already sat out on the table.

He suspected it would've still been there in the morning, since he was usually the first one up anyway. *(Someone* had to make sure these idiots fed themselves before they went out when they were preoccupied with a case.) George took his glasses off for a second and rubbed them against his t-shirt so he could read the thinking cloth's writing better next to the plate of biscuits.

Order restored! We wanted to make sure you weren't skipped :) - L & L

It was in Lucy's handwriting, he noticed with a smile. There were two biscuits on the plate, and he helped himself to the first one. As he did so, a light caught the corner of his eye from the living room. He hadn't noticed that the door was open, but now that he turned his attention to it he realised it was open a crack, just enough to let some of the light out.

He supposed he ought to check and make sure they were alright…

George didn't move.

They did have each other…

Fine. He gave up and dusted the crumbs from his biscuit off his oversized t-shirt, before treading as lightly as possible across the hall to ease open the living room door.

It became immediately clear that they didn't need *any* help.

Lockwood's eyes were closed, his mouth slack in a state of relaxation that he only let himself show when he was asleep. His head was turned to one side slightly, just enough to make room for Lucy to fit perfectly under his chin. She was asleep as well, wedged between Lockwood and the back of the sofa so she wouldn't fall off, her arms wrapped around him as an extra 'precaution', probably. Lockwood had one arm around her, the other hanging off the sofa with a glass of water held lightly in his grip. It was a miracle it hadn't slipped between his fingers and spilled all over the carpet already.

Well, it was water, so it wouldn't be that much of a problem… But George didn't want to have to clean it up all the same, so he took a few light steps closer and eased the glass from Lockwood's hand gently. Oblivious, Lockwood smiled in his sleep and used his now-free hand to pull Lucy closer to him, humming in contentment. She smiled a little too, from what George could see of it. Her hair was covering most of her face, but he could see the smallest of smiles as she turned her head a little and nestled closer to Lockwood.

God, they were insufferable.

George smiled to himself as he slowly backed away from them and pulled the door too behind himself. He didn't want to shut it completely, just in case the click woke them up. He wouldn't be surprised if they slept through an earthquake in this state though, even if Britain didn't get very many of those. Well, very many *noticeable* ones anyway.

He retreated to the kitchen and picked up the plate with the remaining biscuit on, taking it back up to his room with him.

Maybe they were right.

Maybe order *had* finally been restored.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!