



# KATE CHRISTENSEN'S SOFT BOYS



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## A NOTE FROM KATE CHRISTENSEN:

Harry Quirk, the narrator of *The Astral*, cannot cook. He has trouble feeding himself after his wife kicks him out: he has to depend on the kindness of others.

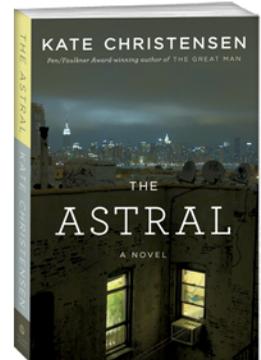
However, although this isn't in the novel, there is one dish that he knows how to make. He made it for his kids on schooldays for breakfast when Luz was sick. He learned to make it from his own father, who made it for himself and Harry when Harry's mother was sick or out somewhere. It is simple, comforting, and warming on a cold morning.

Harry and I happen to share this childhood food memory: When I was a kid, on what passed for chilly mornings in Arizona (we had to wear a cardigan sweater, maybe), my mother used to make my sisters and me soft-boiled eggs with pieces of buttered toast broken into them. We had eggcups, but we never used them. These soft-boiled eggs were so good, we'd lick the bowls clean.

A couple of years ago, my boyfriend, Brendan, and I spent a winter living in Italy, in his grandmother's house in Florence. In the kitchen was a collection of lovely old eggcups. I like eggcups, to look at, but soft-boiled eggs need to be served in a bowl with hot, buttered toast broken into them. I hadn't eaten soft-boiled eggs since childhood, but those eggcups on the kitchen shelf reminded me of how good they'd been, made my mother's way.

One cold, rainy morning, Brendan cut strips of toast and dipped these into a soft-boiled egg perched in an eggcup. I made my mother's version, with buttered, toasted Tuscan bread broken into the bowl, soaking up the yolk. (I cannot eat gluten, but when I was in Italy, I made the decision to just enjoy some damned bread or pasta every now and then and suffer the consequences. This morning, it was worth it.)

My own soft-boiled eggs looked so good, Brendan never used an eggcup again. We called them Soft-Boileds at first, but we soon shortened this to Soft Boys.



## METHOD

With a spoon, gently place four eggs, one by one, into a saucepan of rapidly boiling water. Boil them for 6 minutes. Turn off the flame, run the eggs briefly under cold water, then tap the hat off each one with a knife and carefully slide the innards out of the shells with a spoon. The whites should be firm, the yolks still runny enough to soak into the toast. Break one piece of toast, well-buttered, into each bowl. Salt and pepper generously.

Serves 2.