Daddy's Home

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A pregnant woman prepares for the arrival of her husband, arriving home from military duty after eight months away.

Published on
Booksie

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Kim held her hands to her swollen stomach and watched Tyler sleep calmly on her bed. Ryan wasnâ t due to arrive for another ten minutes but Kim had finished cleaning early, leaving her a few moments of peace before he got home. She walked to the window and pulled the maroon curtains aside to look outside. The snow had started falling an hour earlier and had begun to cover the ground in a thick layer of white powder.

A wave of nausea hit her and she sat on the bed. She reached out and stroked Tylerâ s tiny leg while the baby inside her started kicking, Kim was five months pregnant and not handling it well. Her long brown hair, usually thick and wavy, was pulled back in a limp and sweaty ponytail. She had large bags under her eyes and struggled to fight off nausea. Trying to take care of Tyler by herself during her pregnancy was taking its toll on her body and her mind.

â Daddyâ s gonna be home soon,â Kim whispered, still stroking Tylerâ s leg. â Heâ s missed you so much; heâ ll be so excited to see you.â

That was all heâ d be excited for, Kim knew. She hadnâ t told Ryan about her pregnancy yet. Ryan, the boy sheâ d met her junior year of college. He was tall and handsome, with red hair and striking green eyes. Sheâ d become infatuated with him right away and theyâ d gotten married almost immediately after graduation. Kim got pregnant with Tyler just before Ryan left for his first tour of duty. When he returned he proved himself to be just as good a father as he was a husband. He left again, this time for Afghanistan, and Kim was once again left alone with Tyler. That was eight months ago.

â I bet daddyâ s brought you back all sorts of presents,â Kim said, tears running down her cheek. â He loves you so much.â

Lights shone through the window and a car pulled up into the driveway. Kim stood up and watched as Ryan put the car in park and got out. They made eye contact and Kim waved. Ryan smiled and waved back. He opened the trunk of the car and started pulling out bags.

Kim turned from the window and walked into the bathroom. She closed the door behind her and looked into the mirror. She threw some water on her face and dried it off. She considered her face for a moment and pulled out her hair tie. Her hair fell around her face and she stared at it. Not much better, but it would do. She heard the front door open and Ryanâ s voice called out.

â Kim?â

â Iâ m in the bathroom. Give me just a minute.â

She heard Ryan go into the bedroom and start talking to Tyler. She smiled. Whatever happened tonight she knew that Ryan would always be there for Tyler, he was a good father. Kim sighed and wiped her eyes one last time. She opened the door and walked into the bedroom.

Ryan was standing by the bed, holding Tyler. His suitcase was on the floor sitting next to a giant stuffed bear. On the bed sat a bouquet of roses.

â Hi, Ryan,â Kim said.

Ryan turned and stared at her. His smile vanished and he sat Tyler back down on the bed. Tyler curled up and went right back to sleep.

â Youâ re pregnant.â Ryan said.

â Yeah.â

Ryan sat down on the bed and stroked Tylerâ s leg. He picked up the roses and handed them to Kim, not making eye contact.

â I bought these for you.â

Kim took the roses and pricked her finger on one of the thorns. A little blood ran down her fingertips but she ignored it.

â Iâ m sorry that I didnâ t tell you,â Kim said. â Iâ ve been having a hard time and-â

â How far along are you?â

â Five months.â

â Five months?â Ryan shouted. Tyler stirred in his sleep and Ryan lowered his voice. â Five months?â

Kim sat down next to Ryan and put the bouquet up to her nose and inhaled.

â Do I know him?â

â No,â Kim said. â It was a one night thing. I didnâ t mean for it to happen. I was lonely and-â

â Stop. Iâ ve heard all of this before. This same thing has happened to my army buddies. I never thought this would happen to me, though.â

Ryan stood up and walked to the door.

â Where are you going?â Kim asked, following him.

â I donâ t know. I need to go away for a little bit.â

â When will you be back?â

â I donâ t know.â

â Will you be back?â

â I think so. Iâ ll be back for him at least.â

Ryan walked out the door and got into his car. Kim watched from the window as he drove off. She sat back down on the bed and stroked Tylerâ s leg.

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