

## *On the end... Of s only the beginning*

Michael's brow crinkled in frustration as he paced in the waiting room. Time had almost slowed to a stand still, and he was feeling a little agitated. It was unusual for him to feel the strength of his emotions, but today had been a very bad day indeed.

His face wrinkled as he felt the shame wash over him, as he thought about the horrific ordeal that his wife was going through. He just couldn't face being in there with her.

He was the weak one, he always had been. She was the pillar of strength in their relationship and had held him up over the years. Tears swam into his eyes, as he gazed out the window, watching the rain patter on the window sill. He just couldn't quite believe that the news his doctor had just given him could bring so much joy, and yet so much despair.

The doctors said that it was her age. Michael felt a sob catch in his throat and felt it violently rack through his body. They had wasted so many years. He had been focused, had a career, and just wanted to do what's right. Jenny had supported him through and through – never thinking about herself. She had been the perfect wife to him, and he had failed her as a husband. Nor did he give her what she wanted the most – a child. Until very recently.

She had always been his better half.

At this moment, he felt so lonely, and unforgiving of himself. The selfish thought of death passed through his mind. He shook his head to snap himself out of it. He blew his nose into his ratty tartan handkerchief and dried his eyes again.

"Mr Prendergast?"

"Hmm?" He turned away from the window towards the doctor.

"Your wife is ready to see you." The doctor gave him a warm smile, and patted his shoulder.

Michael felt his stomach flip with nerves. "Does she know? Did you tell her?"

"Yes she knows everything Michael." The doctor smiled at him again, and opened the door for him. "You'll be fine."

Michael walked over to the bed where his pale wife lay looking serenely beautiful, with her pale blonde hair framing her face. He picked up her hand in his, kissed her gently on her forehead, and sat down in the chair next to her. He could hear the sharp little beep of the heart monitor next to her bed.

"Jenny?"

She turned her pale face to face him, and smiled tiredly. Her eyes dilated from the morphine. "It's nearly over Michael. I'm bleeding internally."

"Oh Jenny." He kissed her hand. "You're the most important thing to me – you know that you always will be."

"I know." She whispered. "We've had a good life Michael." She could see a few tears falling down his face. "Now you must go on... you have to."

"I can't." He lay his head on her stomach, and felt his sobs course through him. Every memory that he had of her came flooding back to him.

She stroked his hair, and felt his pain ease with each stroke. "If not for yourself – then for Felix."

He sat up quietly, and gazed into her bright blue eyes. "I will be." He murmured, giving her a watery smile, and sniffed. "I will be strong for him."

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"Good – now tell me a story." Her voice cracked; her breathing labored. He knew he had to be strong. He had to give her a story. That was what he was good at - wonderful stories.

"Mr. Prendergast?"

He turned and saw the doctor standing next to him, carrying a small bundle. The doctor passed the small bundle carefully to Michael, and gave his shoulder a squeeze.

Michael looked down into the bundle, and looked upon the sleeping face of his newborn son. He felt a euphoric sensation come over him. His mind and body felt utter elation, as he gazed into the tiny face.

"I wanted to still be here when you to meet your son Michael. I'm glad I could see this moment." His wife quietly whispered, smiling. "The birth was so hard - I wish you could have been there." He saw a tear slide down her cheek. "I thought we could name him Felix Michael Prendergast."

"Yes of course - a wonderful name." He gave her a warm reassuring smile, and sat down with Felix in his arms. "I'm sorry I wasn't there. I just couldn't handle seeing you in so much pain." He gently kissed the wee boy in his arms. "Let's tell Mummy a wee story, shall we?"

"Thank you Michael. For everything." Jenny looked at them both and smiled. "I love you."

"We love you too." He gave her hand a reassuring squeeze.

*"There was once a handsome young man, in the botanical gardens painting, when a beautiful young girl happened upon him. She said her name was Jenny, and then bluntly asked why he was painting a dead tree. He had laughed and said that it wasn't a dead tree at all, it was just sleeping through the cold winter – and that when spring arrived around it would then blossom.*

*They fell in love shortly after that moment, he the artist and writer, and she the beautiful archaeologist, and they stepped upon the wheel of life together, on an adventure they would never forget... "*

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Lucy Dunlop stared through the big lab window at the scene which had unfolded in front of her. She had been trying to concentrate on her paperwork and testing, but could see that Michael Prendergast was still telling his wife and their newborn the story of their life, and was not aware that his wife had now passed away.

She had seen this sort of death a lot with mothers, over the years. However, seeing it never became any easier. Her heart went out to Michael Prendergast.

She cast her eyes down at the blood results sitting in front of her. That was when she noticed it. The blood types were inconsistent between the parents and the new born. Both parents were O+, but the new born was AB-. She gazed back at the new father through the glass, and then at the results. Since the child was the only one born in her area over the past 24 hours - she knew that there definitely was no mistake.

She tossed up whether she should tell him what she had found. Morally, she knew that she should. But knowing that the child was all that was left of his wife, she decided against telling him that he wasn't the father of the child he held in his arms.