

It was already too late; there was nothing that anybody could do. The damage had already been done. With their futures were in limbo, the thoughts of a happy home were shattered. She sat in her blue suede loveseat rubbing her stomach, fighting back tears hoping the news and orders weren't true. He had only been home for a few hours, and yet their whole worlds were being turned upside down.

Her husband, a PFC in the United States Marine Corps, hoisted got off the couch and walked into the kitchen and poured a glass of water from the pitcher in the fridge.

"I didn't think it would happen this early, I really honestly didn't, but we have no choice, Renee; I have to go."

She didn't respond. She sat on the loveseat staring out the window, rubbing her belly and biting the thumbnail on her left hand. Her face was pale, almost the color of the light cream blouse she was wearing. Her eyes sat in a hard glare straight ahead as she slowly sunk herself deeper into the chair.

There was stillness between them, neither moved or said anything. The clock on the kitchen wall ticked loud like a bomb, ready to detonate at any second. The next one to speak would be one to light the fuse and then the end would begin.

Renee rubbed her temples and let out a large sigh. She adjusted herself in the chair so she sat up straight, almost like she was getting ready to embrace the blast that was about to happen.

"What about Harper? What about me? You just got home literally five hours ago; she's not even here yet, and you won't be here when she does arrive. You will only be home for a month, then gone for two in California, home for two weeks and then gone for seven months again. What am I suppose to do? Raise this child and hope to God that you come back in one piece so she can meet her Daddy?"

Timmer stood at the kitchen sink looking out the window into the yard. He poured the rest of his water down the drain and quietly walked back into the living room where Renee was silently crying. He kneeled on the white carpet, right in front of Renee, who sat in the corner of the living room. He took her right hand and gripped it tight in his and put his left hand on her belly and started to gently rub.

"I know this hard for you, but think about how I feel. I won't even be here to see her arrive, but there is nothing I can do. I can talk to my Staff Sgt. to see if maybe I'm eligible for some days of leave to come home and at least watch her be born. We knew getting into this with your pregnancy and me leaving would be hard, and you have been so strong throughout this whole thing; you can't give up now."

Renee looked at his hand on her belly, and the wedding ring that lay on his left ring finger as tears continuously trickled down her face. She looked up from her belly and looked him straight in the eye. She saw tears were welling up, but the levee in his eyes had yet to break.

"I'm scared, Timmer. I'm actually terrified. I prayed the Marine wife's prayer every night before I went to bed when you were at boot camp and it helped make you it through so you could home to me. I prayed even more when you were in isolation at ITB because they lost your C-bag. I prayed even harder every night of the week we didn't talk when you were going through rifleman training just to let God know that I needed you to come home and come back to me; come back to us. I still pray every night that nothing happens and you will never leave, but I guess God has given me so much already that it's time he takes something way; I just wish it didn't have to be you."

She lowered her head and started to cry. Her cry wasn't a whimper, but yet it wasn't a scream. It was a cry of help and desperation. She hoped that somewhere up in heaven wherever God may be, that he heard it and would maybe find the compassion to change the fate of their futures.

Timmer got up and kissed her on her forehead and pushed back the hair on the left side of her face. He smiled at her, and then walked away and into the bedroom where he gently closed the door.

Renee, restless in the chair, pushes herself up by the armrests and walks into the kitchen and leans against the counter. She looks out the window for a few minutes as thoughts consume her mind about him leaving and the fate his deployment might bring. She sets her hands down on the counter only to feel sheets of paper on her palms. She looked down to see that the papers underneath her palms were Timmer's orders of deployment. As her palms began to burn from the anguish the pages brought underneath, the sun went behind a cloud only never to be seen again.

The next few weeks passed like nothing had ever happened. Timmer enjoyed his homecoming and returned back to work only a few days after being home. He spent the weekends working on the nursery by

painting the walls a light pink color and putting the white crib together. Renee started hanging up the baby clothes and putting the gifts from her showers into storage bins or neatly tucked away in trunks around the room. Little white baby dresses and shoes lined the floor and hung in a straight line in the closet. It was all coming together; they were finally going to have something that they had both desperately wanted together for awhile. Timmer was leaving in three days for two-month training before he was deployed. Renee was still four weeks out from her due date, for the miracle of her coming early so he could be there was far from plausible and deathly if she did. These next three days were going to be to be just theirs. They both had taken off from work knowing these last days were going to be the last one that they spent together before Harper arrived. They also knew it would be the last few days they had together before Timmer would go off to train to be in harm's way.

The shrieking sound of the phone in the middle of the night made them both almost fly out of bed. Timmer rolled on his side and grabbed the phone while Renee feverishly tried to get up to turn on the light.

"Hello?" said Timmer in a faint but sleepy voice. The voice on the other end of the line was deep and harsh, almost to the point where it sounded inhumane. Timmer threw off the sheet and threw his legs over the side of the bed. He sat up and rested his elbows on his knees as he kept repeating, "No sir, and yes sir. I understand sir" over and over again. Renee finally got close enough to the edge of the bed to turn the bedside light on. The room was illuminated and too bright for her eyes to handle. Renee closed her eyes for a few seconds and opened them slowly to adjust to the light. As she finally opened her eyes all the way she could see his bags sitting in the corner. Two olive green sea-bags sat in the corner of the room packed and ready. His desert camis with the name 'Bentley' stitched onto the corner breast pocket lay on top of the bags along with his cover and jungle boots. The dog tag that was entwined between the boot laces shimmered in the light from the lamp.

In the midst of her daydreaming haze Renee heard him say, "Thank you sir, you have a nice day too." The clock read 3:34 in the morning. They both had to be up in less than two hours so they could shower, get ready, and take him to the USO at the airport. Renee turned her head and looked over at her husband. He sat on the edge of the bed with his head in his hands and his dogs floating mid-air off his chest. He took a deep breath and swung his legs back under the covers and into bed. He laid back leaning his body against the headboard.

"That was Staff Sgt. Corpus. He called about leaving for training today because plans have changed I guess." He said in a somber voice.

"What do you mean they have changed? What are they going to do just ship you over to Afghanistan tonight in hopes that you know what the hell you're doing so you don't get blown up faster than the men before you did? I swear to God the Marine Corps is the most unorganized self-centered group of . . ."

"Renee! Calm down. He called to tell us that we aren't going anymore; our deployment orders have been terminated and dismissed."

Renee sat there in disbelief. The room fell silent between them. She didn't smile or cry, her face was perplexed if anything.

"Why aren't you going? What happened? Are they serious?" she said frantically in a high pitched voice.

"Obama's new withdrawal plans mean we don't have to go. All the other units from the Midwest aren't going either. I'm not going to war. I'm going to be at home with you and Harper. I'll be home when she arrives and I never plan to leave.

He touched her cheek caught her tear before it fell off the side of her chin. God had heard her cry for desperation. He wasn't leaving, he was going nowhere and that's the only way she ever wanted it to be.

She moved over next to him as he put his arm around her shoulders. She snuggled up next to him and put her head in the crook of his neck. He took his right hand and placed it on her swelling belly and she put her hand right on top of his. This is how it was supposed to be and she wouldn't trade this moment as a family for anything.