



The Unexpected Gift

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John walked into his kitchen, throwing his keys onto the counter along with the mail he had picked up on the way home. Turning to the sink to wash his hands, he found a letter propped against the flower pot on the counter next to the sink. His heart sank and his hands froze on the soap dispenser. He continued to slowly wash his hands, his mind on the person who could have gotten in the house to place the letter there. After drying his hands thoroughly, John sifted through the mail, pulling out coupons, some bills and a magazine. His eyes were continuously locked on the letter on the counter, as though he were afraid it might come alive. He cleaned the counters, scrubbed the sink, organised the refrigerator. The letter stayed closed, but he knew it was time to open it as there was no escaping reality. John gingerly opened the letter.

It was written on expensive stationery, the handwriting elegant and beautiful. His eyes scanned the date on the top right corner of the letter. Apparently, it had been written that day. John took a deep breath and started reading the letter.

"Dad," Tom laughed. He was rolling on the floor trying to cover his stomach where John was tickling. He started to hiccup. John stood up straightening his

clothes and lifted Tom off the apartment floor, smiling.

"Time for bed," he said and Tom subsequently groaned.

"Da-a-dd!" he whined. Jack gave him a look and Tom went quiet. Jack helped him into his pyjamas and lifted him onto his bed with the slide at the end. He always knew when Tom was up because he would slide down and smash into the dresser. The room was not very big.

Tom grabbed his blanket and stuffed bear, snuggling down under the comforter. "Night," he said sleepily. Jack kissed him on the forehead.

"Good night," he replied, smoothing Tom's hair, watching as his son closed his eyes. Jack walked back to the living room cleaning up Tom's toys and the bowl of popcorn they ate while watching a movie. After walking aimlessly around the house for a while, he decided to call it a night. He turned off the apartment lights and entered his own bedroom, which consisted of a dresser, a bed, a night stand and a lamp. As he did every night, he opened the bottom drawer of the dresser, digging under scarves and random socks and pulled out a letter, the envelope worn out from it being opened and closed so much. Once more he pulled out the thick stationery, looking at the date on the top right corner, five years ago. He scanned the top line, a simple "How are

you?" and read the few sentences which had changed his life.

"I'm pregnant. It is yours. I am due on the fourth of August. I cannot take care of the baby. John I am asking, no begging, that you will take the kid. Please."

Jack stood motionless on his bed. Even after five years he had not gotten over this shock. He had stood in his kitchen in shock after reading this. It was from Ellie, who had unexpectedly left him a few months back. He had still not gotten over that. It was a bitter pill to swallow. His heart had broken at the thought of a child, his child, going to another family. He had not cared whether he would be a single father. The baby was his. He had known despite the feeling in his stomach, that he had to be a father to this baby. At that moment that baby became the important thing in his life. It gave his life meaning.

Then Jack placed the letter carefully back in the dresser. He shed his clothes and slid under the comforter of his bed, clicking off the bedside lamp, thinking as he did every night, that no matter how hard it got, he had made the right choice all those years ago. Tom was the light of his eyes. The news had been unexpected, but it was certainly the best gift he had ever received in his life.

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