

His wife was the sweetest, most wonderful woman you could have ever met. She was the whole world and more to him. A petite, beautiful dachshund that had stolen his heart. They'd met in college, fell in love, and dated until their mutual graduations. At no point did their relationship sour and when it came time to set out from college and find full-time work with their degrees, they'd found themselves searching for options that kept them close to one another. Despite suffering a brief period of being in a long-distance relationship, he eventually found a job that let him move closer to her, and before either of them knew it he found himself dropping to a knee and asking for her hand in marriage, and she'd said yes!

After that, the lives of the newlywed Mr. and Mrs. Evans had been idyllic, like a freshly paved road free of holes and debris. Just a smooth ride from one destination to the next as the pair of them changed jobs a few times, being rewarded with better salaries and higher positions, greater responsibilities.

Clara, his adoring wife, was a registered nurse and was now working in the largest hospital San Fernando had to offer and was a well-respected and loved member of the staff there. Gregory, a hare with dusty tan fur in contrast to his wife's dark tones, was a drafter at a construction company that did both the building and the designing of commercial properties. They weren't the same trades, but in their own way they were both building something whether it be a person's health or a person's building.

To top off the cake of their life they lived in a quiet, peaceful neighborhood, too. They owned a nice three-bedroom home with an attached two car garage settled in the center of cozy suburbia. It wasn't the cheapest place for them to be living, but with their combined salaries and their skill with personal finances they didn't have any trouble maintaining this lovely life they'd built for themselves. Things were practically perfect, except for one thing.

The third bedroom of their home was filled with furniture, but empty of its intended occupant. Though it wasn't quite ready to cater to the person that would one day live there, they had the basics down. Dresser, cabinets, and a top dollar wooden crib that could later be converted into a small single bed fit for a growing child. They just didn't have a child to use it yet.

But they'd been trying and trying an awful lot. The start of the year had them both swear an oath to the same New Year's Resolution. Have a baby. That's something they could do in a single year, if they started January 1st. Get pregnant in the first month or two and then by Christmas they'd have a baby in the crib. But January came and went, followed by February, and then March. The days grew longer, the weeks, the months.

Then Clara found herself sitting in a room, now a patient at her own hospital alongside her husband who was there for the same reason. Instead of sitting in the maternity ward like they'd hoped, they were in a different part of the hospital where people go who were struggling to conceive. There, in the offices of Dr. Maxwell, they sat together in the small, sterile room while the good doctor gave them the test results that would determine if either of them could have children.

Clara's results were great! You couldn't get as good of a result for someone her age, her being 26 at the time. Gregory, however, was left feeling pale and cold as the warmth of his wife's hand squeezed around his, tight and comforting. Not only was his sperm count low, but their health was poor, as well. Neither issue was something easily treated, as it was partly stemming from an underlying genetic issue as well as a past groin injury he'd suffered in High School. The prognosis was grim, as there was no fertility treatment that would offer certain results, and IVF would require that a doctor be capable of finding a healthy viable sperm in a sample to fertilize one of his wife's eggs with. Dr. Maxwell was very compassionate with them the entire visit, but he was also being very honest with the results. It was extremely unlikely that Gregory would ever have a child of his own. Even if they spent every penny they had on treatments the odds were just too low. Some problems can't be fixed even with today's technology since Gregory's ran too deep to cure.

The idyllic life they'd shared was shaken from that point forward, with Gregory going in and out of depression while his wife nursed the invisible wound of knowing there was a crib downstairs that would stay empty. Some marriages fall apart after news of this magnitude, but Clara and Gregory's didn't. Sometimes life refuses to deal you the cards you want, just like in a game of poker, but despite the lack of children they'd each done very well for themselves. In the end they chose to forego the expensive treatments on a long shot that likely would miss each time. They'd just have to learn to cope and move on, finding something else to devote themselves to as they both grew older.

And they did grow older, even if it was just a little bit. Gregory was celebrating his 30th birthday while Clara was about to do the same. Four years was plenty of time for them both to move on. The room they'd set aside for the baby was now an empty guest room. The crib was gone, sold now and replaced with a double bed, but the other items were still there since they could be used by anyone if they ever had an extra guest that needed a place to stay.

The two of them had continued on their career paths, making gains here and there until they were a lovely pair of DINKs (dual income no kids). They spent their time and money on personal hobbies and mutual activities, like a love of mini golf and indoor rock climbing. The majority of their social life was spent with Clara's friends from work. Almost everyone in their friend circle were married couples within ten years of age of them. Some of them had kids, which wasn't as awkward as one might have thought.

Not being able to have children hurt less over time. Gregory just learned that whatever motivation and desire he'd had for fatherhood just needed to be aimed at something else. His therapist had encouraged him to be constructive with his pain, to build things to help build himself. Didn't have to be literal, though they did buy a lot of furniture and he enjoyed building and rearranging the house every summer.

He was in better shape now than he was four years ago, same as his wife, and they had enough to do between them that he felt like his life wasn't being wasted. Might not have made it to fatherhood, but he was doing good as a husband and friend to his wife, and he took solace in that. Life didn't seem as bleak as it had been.

Gregory had done his best to move on, and honestly, he thought he did all right, and he knew Clara was happy for him. His partner in life had been next to him the entire time, grieving together, growing together. Things were going to be all right.

Well, Gregory was going to have an interesting story to tell his wife when he got home.

The whole point of him leaving to go out of town was to attend a convention filled with tech vendors that were going to be showcasing new software and tools for architectural design. It was supposed to be a time for tech geeks in his field to be sitting in on demos and talking to vendors about their pricing and support schemes. The convention was being held in a Hilton with its own attached convention center, but a kitchen fire on the ground floor of the hotel had gotten out of hand and an evacuation had been called. The building was saved, but the damage was pretty extensive for large parts of the ground floor, so the organizers decided to end the convention a day early for everyone's safety. Thankfully, the hotel was refunding everyone for the night that they weren't staying now that the convention had been canceled.

At least he got some good out of it. He and a few of his colleagues saw some interesting software innovations that they might look into exploring. Nothing soon since it was going to be expensive. If anything, they might buy a single seat for a particular software and have one guy trained up on its use, like a trial run. But that was for another day.

He wasn't supposed to be driving back home until Saturday but now here he was pulling off the highway on a Friday night to make his way towards the familiar street he called home. His suburb was less than five minutes from the freeway so getting to and from work was a breeze provided the traffic wasn't hell. Since the convention had been cut shut around midday the drive home took him a few hours. With it being close to 10pm he knew his wife would have already had dinner, and he'd stopped at a drive through to grab a double order of large fries and a soda that he could eat on the road. Not healthy, but a lot safer and easier to eat while driving.

At no point did he text his wife to let her know he was coming home early, since in his mind he'd be surprising her and also, he just didn't think it that important. Clara was always the one to be anal retentive about dates and updates, Gregory was more lackadaisical with such things.

Once he was back in the home territory of his street, he could tell half the neighborhood was asleep judging by the lack of lights in people's windows. People tended to hit the sack around this time every night, and he debated if he'd find his wife awake or not. They usually went to bed later on a Friday since neither of them worked shifts on the weekends.

And there was his house, home sweet home. There was only one light on that he could see, which was their master bedroom. That meant she'd be awake, and he wouldn't accidentally spook her if she were to wake up to the sound of someone in her house when she knew she was supposed to be

alone. When he pulled up to his driveway, he saw that the garage was shut, and parked in front of the door was a car he wasn't familiar with. It was dark and the single porch light they had wasn't enough to cast much light over in front of the garage.

Gregory pulled in next to the mystery car, not knowing what to make of the strange arrival. Neighbors have parked in their drive before when they had guests, always with permission of course, so maybe this was a case of that. He'd have to ask Clara about it. He parked right next to the other vehicle and hopped out. All of his luggage was in the trunk, but it was past 10 now and he just didn't feel like dragging two pieces in, and his neighborhood was safe. He'd grab it all in the morning to unpack it.

He did stop to look at the other car. The paint job was clean, a deep red color. It was a nice one, brand new looking Lexus. Must be a neighbor, since a lot of them drove nicer cars or knew people that did. Not a bad looking car, especially when compared to what he was driving. His Hyundai had once been a nice car, but that was six years ago. He turned away from the Lexus and made his way to the front door and let himself in, finding the first floor of the house dark and empty.

"I'm home, Clara!" He said aloud, though not shouting. He didn't think she'd hear him from downstairs, but it was a force of habit to announce himself as he came in through the door before locking it behind him. As he made his way up the stairs towards the master bedroom, he debated whether he should shower or just wait until tomorrow. If he showered now, he'd disturb his wife who was probably eager to sleep, even if she was excited to see him home early.

When he reached the top step the door to the master bedroom was shut, but the bedroom light was on judging by the thin line of light coming from just under the door.

"Clara, I'm home. They ended the convention early." He said aloud in a volume he knew she'd hear. Not shouting, but a conversational volume you'd use to speak to someone you knew was standing in another room from the one you were in. He didn't hear any reply back from her, and when he reached the bedroom door, he heard music playing.

Normally if Clara was listening to music, she'd have her earbuds in, but this was music playing out loud in the room. He guessed it wasn't that weird since he wasn't home in bed next to her so she didn't need to worry about messing up his sleep schedule if she wanted to listen to something while reading one of her books. Explains why she apparently hadn't heard him though.

As his hand reached out to touch the doorhandle, he heard his wife's voice and stopped in his tracks. She wasn't talking to Gregory, she was talking to someone else, and his heart skipped a beat, a sensation of cold washing over him briefly before he pushed it back with rationalizations, such as her talking to someone on the phone.

"-have to do anything-." Gregory heard a distinctly male voice, and the cold sensation struck him again from head to toe like a tidal wave. He could hardly hear the words being spoken through the door. He was frozen in place, like shell shock. The car in his driveway wasn't a neighbor! His heart was

pounding so solidly in his chest it was like someone was beating on his chest from the inside, desperate to break free.

"-none of this ever happen-" The voice was still speaking, but only pieces made it through the door with the background noise of music muddying up the rest of it. He broke his frozen posture, staggering forward and almost falling, but his hand caught the door frame. He was winded, his guts feeling like they'd been scooped right out of him.

Was this really happening? Was Clara cheating on him? As his heart pounded like a drum he felt his blood pressure rise, his breaths quickening like he'd just finished a sprint. If it got any worse he might actually have a legit panic attack! What was happening to his life? His almost perfect life was now a cracked mirror of ugly faces staring back at him as he tightened his grip on the doorframe with anger.

He reached for the doorhandle again, fully intent on shoving the door open and-

"-don't know how... keep going-" His wife's voice came next, and it broke him inside. Hearing her with another man was breaking him, and he swallowed a dry, painful lump before feeling his eyes burn hot. He was flip flopping between anger and anguish as he stood at the bedroom door, both his hands now both trembling.

"Clara-" A man's voice said her name, and he sucked in a breath and put his other hand on the opposite side of the doorway. He was afraid more than anything. He was so afraid, dumbstruck and terrified, angry and hurt. How many different ways can a man feel at once before something gives and he falls apart? Gregory felt like he was falling apart and in a moment of physical weakness he slid to the floor, knees hitting the carpet with his hands holding him upright at the foot of the door.

"-wouldn't be here if I didn't want to-" The man's voice was still talking. Tears were now leaking down his cheeks, soaking his fur as he slumped his head forward. His forehead tapped the door, but the pair on the other side didn't seem to notice as they kept going, the music as background noise to hide their affair.

"Can we take it slow?" His wife said, her words coming clearly through the door now that he was so close.

"Of course, we can, however slow you want it to go. Babies are patient, they come when they're ready to." Came the man's reply, and Gregory froze stiff. Babies?

"I've waited so long, I can't go another year with that room sitting empty!" Clara replied, her voice distraught. Gregory pulled his head away from the door, his pain and anguish turning a shade of confusion as his frozen state warped and twisted into a cold shiver. He shuddered against his own will before turning his head and pressing the majority of his ear to the door.

When he heard his wife let out a sharp gasp he nearly jumped out of his skin, goosebumps crawling across him as he heard a sound from his wife that only Gregory had ever heard, but now

another man was hearing. The pair didn't speak for a moment, all Gregory could hear was his wife occasionally letting out a gasp, like she was trying to hold it in. Sometimes she would hum, sounding like she'd made a squeak from behind tightly held lips.

"I'll make sure it won't stay empty for long, I promise." The man said something to break the silence, and Gregory sank lower against the door.

"We'll take it slow, like baby steps. As many steps as it takes until you have that baby." He continued, and Gregory took his turn to gasp.

His wife was cheating on him to... to have a baby? After all these years, she was still wanting to try? Gregory's whole world felt like it was crumbling again. It'd been four years since they learned he couldn't give her any children! They'd tried and tried but had given up. They'd moved on! She told him she was ok, that it was all ok! Had she been lying to him the whole time?

She gasped again, louder this time and followed by a familiar noise she'd make whenever Gregory left her squirming in bed under his touch. His heart was in pieces, his wife was...

"You'll give me a baby?" She asked the man, a pleading sound in her voice.

Gregory openly wept now, tears streaming down his face and leaving a damp spot on the door. All this time she'd been wanting a child that he could never give her. Hiding it from him.

"You know I will, you just need to relax and let me do it." Was the man's reply.

Clara let out another loud gasp, openly panting as if something was happening on the other side of the door. Gregory was done, he pushed himself away from the door and fell backwards onto his rear in the hallway before scrambling up to his feet. On trembling legs, he retreated back downstairs towards the front door.

He was in full flight mode, he couldn't think, he was on autopilot. By the time he reached the front door he had his legs under control, but his hands were a nervous mess. Once he was finally outside the air felt oppressive, like he was being swallowed up whole by the night air and would never be seen again. The streetlights around him were too few and too dim, like he was in a horror movie with predators lurking in every shadow and each one had their hand on his wife's body upstairs as she gasped and moaned for a man that could give her the children she wanted.

Gregory got the door open and shut it behind him, struggling painfully to lock it back like how he found it. Back inside his car he cranked up, grateful that his wife had thought to turn on music before she decided to cheat on him. She didn't hear him arrive and she wouldn't hear him leave. He looked out the passenger side window of the car and saw the nice Lexus parked next to his own. A man that could give her a baby and afford a nice car, too.

He started crying openly as he backed out of the driveway and started driving. He didn't stop driving until the gas light came on and he had no idea where he was. He filled up the tank at the first station he came to, and then parked in the lot and started looking for a hotel in the area he could stay at. If only he'd texted her earlier in the day, then maybe he could have stopped her, but then he would have never known that she was planning to cheat on him.

He didn't get any real sleep. Maybe he dozed off in the early AMs, but if he had he couldn't recall. He didn't feel rested, just exhausted from head to toe. Between the conference leaving him physically and mentally drained, and then last night's revelation leaving him emotionally drained... Gregory was a wreck. A long shower left him feeling clean on the outside, but inside he felt dirty.

Clara was expecting him to be home today, and she'd sent him a good morning text that he hadn't replied to. He always replied to her texts and so he knew it would be out of character if he didn't. Gregory had to sit on the edge of the hotel bed and type out a short reply. Told her he was still expecting to be home around 1 or 2 o'clock. That gave him a few hours to... think.

What was he supposed to do? His anger had cooled from last night, but the rest of it? Still sat in his gut like a cancer, malignant and growing. It hurt, it hurt so much knowing what she'd done to him, but every time that part of him that was angry tried to burn white hot, he started thinking of why she'd cheated on him in the first place. And then his blood ran cold, knowing that if he'd only given her a child himself, she'd never have strayed from him.

He flip flopped between being angry at her for cheating and being angry at himself for things he logically knew he couldn't control. Life wasn't fair! Everything had been great! His marriage was good, it was healthy, he and his wife did everything together. They had been happy!

Was she... Had she been lying to him this entire time? He was the one with the problem, it was his health that left them childless! Was that why? Was she afraid of hurting him? Or was it something else? Sitting alone in a hotel wasn't helping him, and he was running on an empty stomach. The fries and soda from the night before were a poor substitute for a proper meal. He needed to get something real in him, and then maybe he'd feel better. Maybe driving would help him too. He always did a lot of thinking and introspection when he drove. Maybe he'd feel better enough by the time he got home that he could... know what he should do.

Several hours later he pulled into his driveway at 1:30, and he didn't feel any better on the inside. When he looked at himself in the rear view mirror, he knew he didn't look better on the outside. He could see it in his eyes.

Clara would notice. All he could do was... lie. Lie like she'd been lying and hope he fooled her as well as she'd fooled him. He pressed the button on the garage door opener and waited for the door to

slide up. As he waited he looked to his left and right and didn't see a Lexus. Of course, he wouldn't have, that man would have been long gone by now. Whoever he was.

A part of him wanted to know the man that had... The angry part of him. The part of him that not only wanted to be angry but wanted someone else to blame. Pin the blame and the pain onto whoever that guy was, but another part inside him was quick to add that Clara wanted a baby. She was as much to blame as any man she could lay with, including her own husband.

He hopped out of the car and walked to the back, popping the trunk open with his key fob. As he pulled the two pieces of luggage out of the trunk, he heard the door open in the garage that led into their kitchen.

"Welcome back!" His wife's voice sang, Clara sounding no different than he was familiar with.

As she came around to the back of the car, he shut the trunk and for the first time she saw his face, and he saw hers. There was an instant look of worry on her face.

"What's wrong, baby?" She asked, and instantly approached him with concern.

A part of him wanted to recoil, a part of him wanted to embrace, a part of him wanted to just scream in frustration. He smiled at her, putting on his best face.

"Nothing's wrong. Just running on fumes right now." He told her, not completely lying. She switched to a look that made it seem like she was pouting, then came in for a tight hug. Her arms went around hers, and after a moment's hesitation he returned the gesture. He felt out of body as he hugged her, like he was holding those pieces of wood in his hands with strings attached, making his body dance like a puppet as he commanded himself to act out the parts he knew he was supposed to play.

"Are you sure, baby? You look awful. Did something happen at the conference?" She asked him, and he stepped away to grab his luggage, but she took one of them from him and together they made their way out of the garage and into the kitchen.

"The conference was fine; it's just I didn't like my room." He started lying off the cuff, complaining about his hotel room. Sensible complaints that would explain why he looked the way he did. The air conditioner making strange noises through the night, the mattress being uncomfortable, rude neighbors in adjacent rooms. He blamed his appearance on just not getting any good sleep the last few days.

"Well, how about we go to bed early tonight so you can sleep hard. I promise I won't have my earbuds in either. You look like roadkill, Greg."

"I guess I didn't realize how bad I was looking." He lied.

He finished out the rest of the day telling her about the conference, but carefully omitting the part about it ending early. Clare rarely interacted with any of his coworkers, so he wasn't worried about someone from that half of their marriage revealing the hotel fire. Gregory was safe to lie and hide the fact that he'd come home early and caught her red handed with another man.

If he was going to confront her about it, he knew it couldn't be today. He was too tired, in every way possible. What he needed was to rest, get his strength back and hopefully he'd have enough to figure out what the next step was going to be. That night when they went to bed, she kept her word about not putting her earbuds in. No music tonight, she let the bedroom be silent.

When she put her book down and tried to make a move on him for sex he wanted to recoil but stifled it down. He told her he was too tired, and that maybe tomorrow if she still wanted to. She took him at his word and instead cuddled up next to him, and same as before, he puppeted his body into its designated role, acting as it should act even though he felt like he was no longer living in his own skin. Just hollowed out and wooden.

The next day did not bring with it a solution. He zombie walked through both Saturday and Sunday. He kept trying to work himself up to saying something, but he didn't know how to do it. How does one accuse their wife of cheating on them, how do you reveal you caught them red handed? Maybe if he wasn't the one being cheated on, he'd have had a ready and obvious answer, but with him as the victim he felt like he was walking through a mine field of possibilities that threatened the very fabric of his marriage and his life.

He didn't want to blow it all up. Gregory didn't want his marriage to end.

To Clara's credit she didn't seem different to him. She was the same lovely woman he'd known for years, the same woman he'd fallen for in college.

That just made it harder, almost like maybe it wasn't even real. Could he just sleepwalk through the rest of his life pretending it was just an awful nightmare? No, he couldn't. If she were cheating on him to have a child then she'd have a child, wouldn't she? And the two of them would have to confront the reality that their fertility doctor had, as kindly as he could, told them the odds of Gregory naturally siring a child was near nonexistent. It'd be a miracle baby.

If he hadn't caught her, what would he have thought when she showed him the positive pregnancy test? He didn't know. Never in a million years would he have thought it possible that she'd betray him. It just was not a possibility. He might just have taken her at her word and fell for it. That part of him that had wanted to be a father would have been singing praises to the Lord, like a born again Christian finding Jesus. A miracle had happened, and he'd been blessed enough to witness it.

But miracles weren't real. Sometimes the answer is that there is no God and that Mary cheated on Joseph.

Days later, back at work and going about his life the same as Clara was going about hers, he wondered if that test would come. How would she handle it? Would she hide it until she started to show? Or just show him the test and pretend that he was a daddy? He didn't know.

He waited. As one day led to another, he found it easier to pretend like everything was normal. He felt like less of a zombie the further away into the past that terrible night went. The pain was still there, but he found it easier to bury deep. It was like that trip to Dr Maxwell's four years ago. That awful pain had hit him hard, but as time passed, he learned to swallow it down and focus on other things. Gregory went back to using the advice from past therapy sessions to cope in healthy ways.

The good thing was that he and Clara shared a lot of activities, and that they were an active couple. They each worked their forty hour shifts and had schedules only an hour different from the other. He'd get home first and then her, and after that they usually had something to do. Sometimes errands, other times appointments. Their weekends usually included one or two activities either by themselves or with some friends. Mini golf, a nice dinner, double dates, indoor rock climbing, gym visits.

It occurred to him after a while that Clara hardly had any time in her schedule for her to cheat, and Gregory let himself believe that she couldn't have had gone behind his back very often. One look at her calendar would show that she just didn't have enough empty squares available for her to slip in an affair. Whatever time she might have had to cheat was time where Gregory knew where she was at. She had friends, they both had family. Neither of them were in a marriage where they had ample time every day to wander off into someone else's pasture.

So, how often had she done it? That was a dark thought and he kept trying to make excuses for her. He already blamed himself for it, his infertility that wasn't his fault to begin with. But he loved her, and he wanted everything to have a reason. Some reason that would let him not hate her, that would let him keep their marriage together. If that pregnancy test didn't set off a chain of events that would destroy everything that they had together.

And yet after a few weeks of him having caught her, there was no big reveal. He googled how long it takes for a pregnancy to show and was getting mixed results depending on what website he was on. He was paying careful attention to her appearance, trying to figure out if her belly was changing. Gregory didn't notice anything. He just felt more guilty. She wanted a child, had wanted one so badly when they first started trying. It had broken her heart when the news dropped that he couldn't give her one.

She'd carried that pain silently in her heart for four years. That's the only reason she'd cheat. Surely, it just must have broken her. A moment of weakness in the face of an unmet need her husband couldn't fulfill. He was right back to where he was after the results came in. His self esteem was in the shitter. The only difference now was that he'd been through this before and he knew how to hide it. Gregory had learned well how to put on a smile and wear it like a mask when the truth was, he felt like trash.

And Clara never got pregnant. They celebrated her 30th birthday at her favorite restaurant, and that night they had sex. They'd been having sex every so often, usually once or twice a week. This wasn't that unusual. Sometimes they had sex more often, sometimes less. They'd been together long enough that it wasn't like they had the newlywed energy anymore. But she was in the mood more often than he thought was normal. At least, for this many weeks in a row.

He kept expecting a pregnancy test, some kind of admission that she, or they, were going to have a baby. Gregory would then understand why she was having more sex with him, to make it look like he was the lucky father.

It was starting to bother him that she was never coming forward with news of a baby. It was like he was being gaslit. He knew what he'd heard that night, he knew why she was with another man, and yet now they were more than a month out from her cheating on him and there'd been plenty of time now for her to either begin to show the slightest hint of a bump or at least enough for her to know on her own that she was pregnant, enough to warrant a test. Neither, nothing. It was like the whole thing was a nightmare after all, but he knew that was a lie.

He desperately wanted it to be true.

Did she give up? He was watching their schedules like a hawk, and he knew she never had time to cheat. Even with her being at the hospital for her shift he knew she wasn't cheating. Clara had too many friends at the hospital, and those friends were his friends. Both male and female. If Gregory had wanted to cheat, he could have done it, since his wife didn't have enough connections with his workplace for her to find or hear anything suspicious through the grapevine. Not her though, the web of connections in the hospital made it so that if she was taking a lot of time off, or leaving early, coming in late... It would eventually work its way around to Gregory.

They were friends with good, moral people. He believed most of them would speak up and say something if they thought something was going on. Clara couldn't cheat on him, not unless Gregory broke his own schedule and did something unpredictable.

Like if he went to a convention where he'd be gone for a few days.

Not only was it his fault she didn't have a child, but it was also his fault that he'd created the window of time needed for her to stray. This was all just Gregory victim blaming himself, but in a dark way it was true. It forced him to consider that any time he broke schedule and left for a trip, which happened once or twice a year at a minimum, then Clara could cheat on him. If she wanted that baby badly enough, and since she hadn't told him she was with child yet that meant that maybe her last encounter hadn't worked out. She would need to try again, wouldn't she?

Did he think she would?

If she'd already cheated on him once, maybe more, then yes... He believed she would.

The part of him that still had a spine knew that if he wanted to catch her, to out her for her betrayal, then he'd need to prove it. He was upset with himself for having done nothing that night. He could have pulled his phone from his pocket and started filming, catching them raw in the act and holding it against her in person and in court after he served her the papers, as painful as that would have been.

If he allowed her to cheat again, gave her a golden opportunity, then he could catch her red handed and do what he ought to have done the first time! If he had the balls.

Gregory didn't believe he had it in him. Each day that passed him by from that painful night he felt defeated even if he hid it well. Any time Clara noticed that something was off he had a reasonable excuse. Therapy was helping him in ways he never would have considered. He dove into his work, focused hard on his and Clara's hobbies, and often times he could push aside the memories, out of sight and out of mind.

But at night, when he and Clara were both lying in bed, his mind would wander soon as it went lights out. She could cheat on him at any moment, and the thought of not knowing when that would be gnawed on him enough that it took him longer to fall asleep than normal, and it was leaving him less rested each and every day. He couldn't handle not knowing when it would happen next.

He didn't have the strength to call her out, to confront her, but he didn't have the strength to endure the torture of not knowing, either.

If he gave her a chance to do it on purpose, then he could put it behind him. Maybe if she got the pregnancy, she wanted so badly she'd stop. She'd be so focused on her new baby that cheating would be off the table. At least, he hoped that'd be the case. He didn't know what he was supposed to do.

That was a lie.

He knew what he was supposed to do, he knew what he'd be telling a friend of his to do if they confessed that they'd caught their wife cheating on them. But since this was all happening to Gregory his advice fell on his own deaf ears. He wasn't going to do what he should be doing. He was going to do whatever it took to make sure his idyllic life didn't shatter...

Gregory sat on the edge of the bed in the cheap hotel he'd picked out. He'd selected one that wasn't far from where he lived so that he could make it back to the house in record time if he needed to. He thought he had it all planned out.

For better or for worse he was going to prove to himself that Clara was being unfaithful, and hopefully, prove that it was because she wanted a baby. That, or he'd discover she was cheating for

another reason. He still wasn't prepared to confront her, but he didn't think life was going to make that easier for him, and waiting wasn't going to make it easier either. So, having finished his shift on Thursday he sat at this hotel and not his house, waiting for the time to pass.

As far as Clara knew her husband would be leaving work today to drive to another town where he'd be staying until the weekend. There he'd have a series of software demos and training sessions with a vendor his company was thinking about purchasing seats from. This was all technically true, but the demos and sessions were going to be done over zoom and during normal business hours. To all of his coworkers, he'd still be working his shifts in the office and leaving to go home at his usual time. The only thing was that he wasn't driving home after work.

The clock was ticking and getting closer to when Clara would have normally gotten home, but today he knew was different. It hadn't been planned, but her mother at the last minute had asked her for help with some kitchen renovation. Clara would be visiting her mother after work, according to her Facebook, and then she'd be on her way home. Gregory was alone and waiting for the time to tick by as his wife went about the rest of her day.

If she was going to cheat on him then she had late this evening, and then later afternoon to evening of tomorrow. This cut down the windows of time Gregory had to watch her considerably. He'd never done anything like this before, but he understood enough from tv that you never should drive your own car if you're trying to spy on someone. For that reason, he'd called an uber after he'd checked into the hotel and had the uber drive him to a local Enterprise where he picked up a cheap rental that he'd drive for the next few days.

For a man hurting on the inside and unsure of what to do, he thought he had his plan pretty well thought out. He'd watch her Facebook, and then keep tabs on his texts. Sooner or later, he'd hop in the rental and drive to his house and just cruise by. He'd look for that Lexus. He didn't have a photo of it, but he knew it was a deeper shade of red than the usual coat a sports car would have. No one he knew drove a Lexus in his area, at least nothing like what he'd seen that night. That car would be his tip off if something was going on.

As evening closed in, Clara texted him and asked if he had gotten to his hotel safely, and he replied that he did. He asked her about her mother, and they shared a back-and-forth conversation by text for several minutes until his guilty conscious crept up on him too strong and he called her. She picked up, and they finished their conversation on the phone an hour later. As they ended the call, she was telling him she'd need to make herself something for dinner, and that he should do the same.

It didn't seem like she'd be cheating on him tonight, but you never knew. Maybe the owner of the Lexus was impatiently waiting in the room for their call to end.

He was hungry, the sound of his stomach told him that more than his brain did. He left the hotel and used the rental to find a drive-through. As he ate in the parking lot, he kept checking the time, and eventually his nerves got the better of him and he started eating quickly, dashing to finish his meal so he

could crank back up and start driving towards his house. By the time he was pulling onto his street his heart was racing, but there in front of his house was an empty driveway.

A wave of guilt hit him, and he felt sick. He was spying on his own wife.

Gregory pulled past his house and drove away and returned to the hotel to have a restless night's sleep.

The next day he drove to work in his personal vehicle, put in his hours and maintained contact with his wife via text. No one knew his plot, not his coworkers or his wife, but the reality that he was plotting to catch his wife in the act rode heavily on his shoulders like he'd be caught in the act himself at any moment. He had to keep telling himself that everything would be fine. His coworkers were a bunch of men that seldom stuck their noses into someone else's business, preferring to talk shop and about their favorite sports team.

He finished his shift and pulled away, driving back to the hotel like he had the day before. When he arrived, he swapped over to the rental and drove back to his house to find that it was empty. His wife would still be at work, and so he drove away empty handed. He stalked his wife's Facebook and tried to keep himself from acting out of character over text. He was stressing out so much that he couldn't keep still and found himself pacing the hotel room.

She could be cheating on him right now. Nothing on her Facebook was giving anything away, and her texts weren't revealing anything. He thought of texting her right then but didn't. He didn't need to keep in constant contact, which wouldn't be something he'd normally do. The only thing he could think to do was to just hop back into the rental and drive. Since he wasn't home and she should be off work now, there was plenty of time for her and the Lexus owner to do whatever they wanted.

The sun was still up as he reached the house, saw no one parked in his driveway, and so he kept driving. Every time he made a pass at his house he never stopped. He just cruised by at a normal speed so none of his neighbors would think anything strange about this new vehicle driving through their community. With no one strange at his house he drove back out of the suburb and stopped at another drive thru where he grabbed a light meal. It was early for him to be eating, but if he didn't do it now, he'd have to do it later, and that might keep him from catch them in the act.

He kept returning to that thought, to catching them. His spine kept telling him to act and confront her, but the part of him that was limp felt powerless to do anything but confirm what he already knew. His food went down, but uneasily. He felt uncomfortable, sick. Gregory checked the time, checked his messages, his wife's Facebook. It looked like she had replied to something his father had posted about a half an hour ago. He doubted she'd be actively cheating on her husband if she had Facebook up and telling her father that his new tie looked good on him.

The hare felt trapped in the rental, parked in the lot of a Walgreens. He kept checking Facebook, watching for texts to appear.

As the sky began to turn from yellow to orange, he got a text from Clara. She asked him if everything was going ok with his trip, and he told her that it was. He lied that he was back at the hotel, and that'd he'd gotten an early dinner before leaving the vendor's office. She asked him what he had, and he lied and told her he'd gotten something at a proper restaurant. It would sound weird if he told her the truth that he'd gotten McDonald's.

She replied saying that she hadn't eaten yet and would need to find something in the kitchen. He told her that she should. They ended their text conversation with her asking him if he thought he would be getting home at the same time he'd quoted her before. He told her that he was, unless something came up that kept him from leaving earlier. The lie was that he would be back home a little after noon the next day. Was she just wanting to know if he'd be home when he said he would, or did she need to know when he was coming home to hide something from her husband?

A fresh wave of guilt hit him, and he cranked up the rental and left the lot. He stuck to his plan, as the sky kept turning a deeper shade of orange he passed by his house and saw that no one was there that shouldn't have been. The pain gnawed at him more. He'd jumped through hoops to try and catch her, thinking that it'd be so easy. Surely, he'd thought that his wife would jump at the chance to cheat on him as soon as she knew he was out of the house for a few days. It was starting to look like that wasn't going to happen, and he was worried about the future.

How could he live like this, the stress of knowing she'd betrayed him, and not knowing if she'd do it again. Did he really even understand her motivations? He fled the house that night before anything else had happened between Clara and the man she was with. He felt he knew the truth, but did he really? He had no idea of anything. It was all just a garbled mess in his heart and mind and as he turned towards his neighborhood, he stopped himself.

Gregory pulled the rental over into the lot of a small park that was a few blocks away from their house. He'd never be able to see his house from here, but it gave him a place to safely sit and breathe. He checked his messages, checked Facebook, and then sagged into the driver's seat. He could sit there until nightfall, and then drive away and back to the hotel. His hope that he'd catch her was fading, and it just didn't feel like it was going to happen.

The sky was a deep red, that special shade right before the sun fell below the horizon and the world turned dark. He cranked up again and pulled out of the little lot and started driving. He went a different way. Gregory first drove away from his house so he could make a big loop around. He was killing time, just stalling. A part of him thought to just call it quits and go back to the hotel, and he almost did.

But this was now a sunk cost fallacy. He'd put too much money into this, so to speak, and so he turned the corner, drove a few more blocks, then turned again to make a loop back to his street. It was actually getting dark now, and when he approached his house, he saw that there was only the one light on, the master bedroom. There was no Lexus. If this was any normal evening Clara would be in bed with her music on, reading one of her books. He let the rental cruise by his house until he could no longer comfortably turn his head to watch.

Defeated at last, he reached the end of his block and turned the corner to leave the peace and quiet of his community. As he was about to turn off this street to get onto the service road, another vehicle was making a right turn to drive past him to travel back down the way he'd just come. It was a red Lexus.

His heart fluttered and sputtered like it forgot how to beat properly, and Gregory spun his head around to watch the car drive away. He watched it roll down the street behind him and all of a sudden adrenaline hit him. He made his intended turn onto the service road, but instead of taking the on ramp to hit the freeway he drove down one block and turned right. He kept driving until he reached his street, then painfully turned the wheel to make a right. He knew one of two things would happen as he continued down this street.

He let the rental slowly cruise down towards his house and as he drew near, he saw that there was a vehicle now parked in his driveway. When he was only a few houses away he saw that it was indeed a red Lexus, judging by the shape of the body. And now, instead of there being only a single light on in the upstairs bedroom, there were lights on downstairs in the living room and kitchen areas. Gregory felt lightheaded but kept his driving calm and steady as the car drifted down the street and past his house. He let it continue, making his careful stops at each intersection until he found himself pulling back into the small parking lot of the local park.

No one was using the park, so no one knew he was there. It was such a quiet and peaceful night, and his neighborhood didn't have any kind of active nightlife. Everyone went home and kept to themselves, and there weren't a whole lot of kids in the area. Gregory could just walk back to his house from here and check on things.

He'd already pulled the key from the ignition and was opening the car door. Gregory was on autopilot. He locked the rental up behind him and began to walk back towards his house. As he'd suspected, the streets were empty and quiet. Some houses were completely dimmed out, others had a single light or two in a window. Everyone's blinds were shut. No one would notice him walking down the sidewalk to his own house.

When he set foot onto his own block, he could see the house in the distance. The bedroom light upstairs was still on, but he couldn't see the ground floor clearly enough. Soon, that changed, and he saw that the downstairs lights were now out. He walked past the Lexus, seeing that it was the exact same car he'd seen weeks prior. His heart sank. He was afraid to approach the front door, so he snuck around the side of the house and cut through the backyard using the gate in their picket fence. Clara always closed the blinds on their windows, so he didn't need to worry about being seen by anyone inside, but when he reached their backdoor he hesitated.

The part of him that was adamant that he man up and catch them red handed wanted him to barge in, but the weak part of himself was in control. He quietly unlocked the back door and crept inside as silently as he could. The ground floor was dark and empty. Whatever had been going on here had

come to an end. Gregory quickly moved to the front of the house and peaked outside the living room window, spotting the red Lexus was unmoved from where he saw it last.

Turning around, he looked towards the stairs, the faint glow of light come from the second floor revealing where Clara and the unknown male were at. He couldn't hear anything from where he stood, so he crept towards the stairs and began a slow and cautious ascent. The last time he'd been in this situation he had no idea what he was walking into, and so he'd went up the stairs at a brisk pace. Now? Now he was timid, almost frightened.

At the halfway point of the stairs, he could see over the top step and down the hallway towards the master bedroom. The bedroom door was ajar, light shining out over the carpet as the occasional body moved in and out of the doorway, casting shadows in the hallway. Clara's music was playing, but there wasn't any other noise that he could discern.

Suddenly, the light in the hall vanished, blocked by one or more bodies, voices carrying into the hall and down the stairs.

"-Is that?" First a male voice, only the butt end of a sentence.

"It's downstairs." Clara's voice followed, much more clearly.

Then, one large body entered the hallway and Gregory panicked, realizing that they were exiting the bedroom he fled down the stairs as quickly and quietly as he could. If they were coming downstairs, he needed to hide, but there wasn't anywhere to hide that wouldn't leave him a sitting duck to someone opening a door or looking behind a drawn curtain! He was supposed to be the one catching them, and he was such a mess that he'd turned tail and was now fleeing towards the back of the house from where he'd come.

He didn't want to leave the house, and he was afraid of dipping into the downstairs bath as there was nowhere to hide in there. The guest bedroom was next to the backdoor, and before his wife and the other man could reach the foot of the stairs, he ducked into the guest bedroom and shut the door back the way he'd found it.

"-rush. We're not in a hurry." A muffled male voice came from somewhere down the hall.

Now inside the guest room he looked around. This room would have been their child's bedroom had things been different. There were no curtains to hide behind and the bed didn't have enough room underneath it to fit a grown man.

"I know, but the sooner we do this the sooner it's done." It was Clara's voice, sounding as if she was only feet away from the bedroom door, and his heart froze in terror. He turned to scan the room, saw the closet door and in a desperate gamble pulled it open. They'd been using this closet for storage, but there was just barely enough room for him to squeeze inside before pulling it shut.

Unlike the rest of the rooms in the house, this bedroom had been intended for a baby, and then a child after. The closet was small but had enough room for any clothing a growing child would need. The closet door was unique from all the others in the house, featuring a solid frame with wooden slats in the center. The gaps between the wood weren't so wide that anyone could see through them if they were in the bedroom, but Gregory, being so close, was able to see just fine into the bedroom beyond.

The bedroom door opened, Gregory clapping his hand over his mouth in fear that he'd make a noise and be caught.

She clicked the bedroom light on, flooding the room with light as she entered. Following behind her was the owner of the red Lexus, and Gregory stifled a gasp, nearly biting his tongue in his effort to keep himself from blurting out his shock.

The man that was now standing in the room with Clara was a face he'd not seen in years. The last time he'd seen this man was when he sat across from him and Clara to deliver the bad news that Gregory was infertile. His wife was cheating on him with Dr. Maxwell. His heart sunk, the vicious cruelty of it wrapping its chilled fingers around his heart painfully.

"We've got all night, and even the morning if that's what it takes. We can go as slow as you need, Clara." The man told her.

Watching them from between the slats he felt sick. The other man was older than both of them, probably in his late 40s or even early 50s. The Doberman was tall, towering over Clara by more than a foot. Though they were both different breeds of canine, they were alike in their fur coats. Both a dark black with spots of brown. Would he have even noticed the child couldn't have been his own if the baby came out looking like its mother?

"But the sooner I know it's done, the sooner I can... relax. This has been so stressful, William!" Clara replied, a sound of urgency in her voice as she turned to face the other dog. William, that was his name. Gregory could only remember his last name from the doctor visits. Doctor William Maxwell, now with a PhD in infidelity, and speaking to his wife on a first name basis.

"I know it has; I'm not making light of it. I just don't want you to rush into this when we can take any pace we like. We've all night and until morning, and all we need is one chance." William told her, stepping up to her to put his hands on her shoulders.

Gregory remembered him having a strong grip when he'd shaken his hand at the hospital, the same hand that was now clutching tight to his mouth to maintain his own silence. The same hands now touching his wife, and had touched his wife weeks before, forcing gasps out of her.

"I hope it's only once so I can put this all behind me." She replied, drawing her hands up to her face to rub at her cheeks with worry.

"Only the once, I promise. Give me one chance and you and Gregory will have a baby of your own." He told her warmly, looking down at her from his greater height. Her face was looking downward, her body language all screaming stress and reluctance. The other dog looked as confident as he did fatherly, hands holding onto her shoulders tenderly even as Gregory watched the older man smile in a way that spoke volumes. It was a smile that made Gregory feel sicker, the kind of lecherous smile of someone who desired a woman.

"I know, I know." She removed her hands and looked back up at William, nodding like she was trying to reassure herself.

"Now that we're not in your own bedroom anymore, do you think you'd like to try starting again?" He asked her, and she reluctantly nodded.

Gregory didn't know what to do now. He was trapped in this uncomfortable closet, the dawning horror of his situation growing louder and louder as the pair of dogs on the other side of the closet door began to move towards the bed. Gregory couldn't move, his back pressed to a wall of stacked boxes with the barest hint of a cardboard edge pressing against his backside. He couldn't sit, couldn't turn away, and there was nothing stopping his wife's music from playing as she pulled her phone out of her pocket and started up her favorite playlist.

He was forced to watch as she sat the phone down on the small nightstand next to the bed as William followed her close behind, hands hovering at her shoulders until she had her back turned to him, unbuttoning her blouse. It was slow motion torture as her blouse was removed, and then her pants. She was moving almost robotically, like she was making herself take every action, every step.

This was not the behavior of a woman that was gleefully cheating on her husband. It was hitting Gregory full on in the gut that she really, truly, was doing this because her husband couldn't give her a child. She was doing this because Gregory couldn't do it himself. He felt pale.

The bigger dog pressed his hands under his wife's arms and let them slide forward until they were cupping her breasts. She gasped, and awkwardly held her hands up and let the older canine massage her chest through the cups of her bra until the Doberman tugged the bra down. Her pert breasts popped free, and the Doberman reached behind her and unsnapped her bra and let the garment drop to the floor.

"You doing ok, Clara?" He asked her warmly even as his eyes were alight with carnal fire.

"Y-yes. I am." She replied quietly.

The Doberman took her by her shoulders and slowly spun her around to face him, the big dog drinking in her body with his eyes.

"You're going to be a wonderful mother, Clara." He told her, and she nodded, her lips tight together.

"I know last time we went too fast. Going nice and slow this time. I'll go as slow as you need me to." He told her, and she nodded again. Did this mean that the last time William was here they didn't have sex? Was that why she never announced she was pregnant?

"I know, I know you will. Let's, um, let's start small." She replied nervously and the bigger dog guided her closer towards the bed until she was instructed to sit on the edge. She did, and the Doberman knelt down in front of her and pushed her legs apart.

Gregory could only see the back of the Doberman, as his wife looked away from the older dog, hiding her face behind her hands as she allowed herself to be tended to by the other canine. Biting nervously on his own tongue, Gregory tried to control his breathing, to not make any noise. He was as terrified of getting caught as he was of being forced to watch this! If they caught him, they'd stop, and Clara would never again have a chance of having a baby. This would destroy her, destroy Gregory! Whatever their marriage had been, no matter how wonderful, would just shatter!

Clara laid down on her back, her legs spreading wider as the Doberman's head moved and bobbed between her thighs, a subtle wet sound growing louder between them that the music from her phone couldn't quite mask. Gregory knew what this other man was doing to his wife, and when the dog reached to his wife's sides and started tugging at the sides of her panties, he felt awful. Her panties hit the floor and the wet noises continued until Clara was struggling to hold in her noises.

Eventually, she started gasping, little noises that were too sharp for the music to hide. The Doberman stopped.

"Let it happen, Clara. You need this if I'm ever going to do what I need to do." He told her.

She nodded rapidly, unwilling to look at him, but agreeing with him all the same. The dog knelt back down, and the noises returned, louder and more fervent as the Doberman began to aggressively work his head between his wife's thighs. Clara pulled her hand away from her mouth, eyes welded shut, squirming on the bed until she spat out a gasp. Soon as she did her breathing grew rapid. She was giving out all the signals of an impending orgasm, the same signals Gregory had pulled from her body many times on his own. She was going to cum for another man, and when she finally popped, the shock and pain was too much.

Tears began to run down his cheeks as he watched his dear Clara writhing and gasping on the bed while the old dog hungrily dug his face down between her legs. When she was finally finished, the Doberman stood back up. Below him on the bed his wife was still panting, laid out limp and panting on the bed.

"Now let's get me ready." He told her, and from Gregory's vantage it looked like he was beginning to unbutton his shirt. While the older dog worked to free himself of his shirt, Clara picked herself up off of the bed and scooted herself to the edge of the mattress. She was quickly obscured by the tall dog, her small body mostly hidden from view. As the Doberman dropped his shirt to the floor the

snapping of a button was heard, then a zipper. The dog reached his hands down in front of him, and from the closet there wasn't much to see.

Trapped and in quiet anguish Gregory could only stand still, carefully leaning backwards against the stack of boxes behind him as the pair in the bedroom continued their activities. The Doberman dropped his trousers, and then his underwear.

"You can do it." His voice rang, reassuring and inviting.

She didn't reply with words, but Gregory could imagine what she was doing. William was making her go down on him, and it tore him up inside. It didn't take before the old dog began to make noise of his own, noises of satisfaction. The music from his wife's phone was noisy, the cheerful tunes Clara enjoyed were hardly quiet, but not enough to drown out the growing sound of something wet happening on the other side of the big dog's body.

That wet sound grew louder until there was a noisy gag, followed by a sharp cough.

"Try again, slower this time." The Doberman told her, the tilt of his head revealing he was looking down at Clara, his hands in front of himself still, probably guiding her.

"That's it." He continued, letting out a quiet groan of pleasure until moments later there was another gag, and a cough.

"You're too big." Gregory heard his wife whisper, and he wrapped his other arm around himself and squeezed. The hand on his mouth was tight enough, but now he felt awash in shame. Had he not suffered enough? When would this end?

"You're in too big of a hurry, Clara. It's not going anywhere. Relax and try again. You can stop when I'm ready for you." The dog told her, and she must have tried again, because the Doberman started making his own noises once more.

Gregory wanted to plug his ears, to shrink down until he was nothing, to just vanish. He was regretting ever taking things this far, he wished he'd listened to that stronger part of himself that wanted to be angry and stamp his feet. Now, he was stuck in a closet in his own home.

All he could do was to shut his eyes, but that didn't keep out the noise. The Doberman continued to groan, louder with time, as a wet slurping sound filled the room that the music couldn't hide. Clara was giving their doctor a blowjob in their own home behind her husband's back. He started trembling, fresh hot tears soaking his fur as he prayed that it would be over soon. If he was lucky, they'd get it over with quick so the Dr. could dress himself and leave. Clara would leave the room and Gregory could sneak back out, cowed, and defeated.

"Oh, oh!" The big dog suddenly moved. The sound of his wife sputtering and coughing followed. "That's it, ok. Maybe if I was ten years younger, I wouldn't have needed that."

If William was trying to be self-depreciating, the effect was lost on Gregory. Perhaps, the same was true for Clara because she didn't have a reply ready for the older dog.

"So, do you think you're ready for me to try?" He followed up, Gregory making the mistake of opening his eyes. Through the narrow slats he saw that the pair had shifted. Clara was sitting on the edge of the bed, her knees held tight together while she crossed her arms over her chest to preserve what little remained of her modesty. Besides her, the old dog had sat down beside her, wrapping one arm behind her back to put a hand on her shoulder.

Gregory was frozen stiff, in shock. Looking at the old canine had him confused. For a man of his age, he still looked like he was in good shape. Not perfect, he had a slight gut on him, but his chest, arms, and legs all seemed to carry the tone of a man that made an effort to stay healthy. He was a doctor, after all. He was probably very healthy.

Between the Doberman's thighs was his cock and balls, on full display without a single shred of shame or modesty. The dog looked confident, keeping his eyes locked onto Clara's, rubbing her shoulder with his hand while the other hand drifted to his cock and began to casually stroke it. The Doberman's cock was huge, his nuts were huge. Gregory shut his eyes again; he couldn't bear the sight of it anymore. Was his wife seriously going to sleep with him?

Unfortunately, he was going to find out soon. She'd invited him here into their home to give her a child, and they'd come too far to give up now.

"I... I think so." Gregory heard her reply.

He wasn't looking, but it sounded like they were moving. His imagination was almost as alarming as the real thing as he tried with all his might to blot out the truth in front of him. On the other side of eyelids screwed tightly shut the mattress audibly creaked as the weight of two people joined it. The rustling of fabric was quiet under the music, but soon there was a whispering. Gregory couldn't make out the words, and he was glad for it. He didn't want to know what they were saying anymore, he'd heard enough.

"Just relax." The Doberman said a little louder, and somewhere out there was his wife's audible breathing.

Soon, he could hear Clara gasping, followed by a strained whimper.

"Don't clench, just relax and let me in." The bastard kept talking! His wife kept whimpering and gasping as the mattress quietly creaked, fabric rustling, the older dog groaning with satisfaction.

Very briefly he opened his eyes, regretting it instantly, then shut them tight again until new tears were beading up at the corners. What he'd seen was still seared into his vision, like his eyes had stared too long into the sun and its rays were still visible on the inside of his eyelids. The old dog had

propped a single knee onto the mattress, Clara bend over the side the bed while the Doberman leaned over her smaller body.

They'd been slowly rocking. Even now the rocking continued. Clara's whimpers were now a constant, the gentle slow creaking of the bed signaled each and every one of the dog's thrusts. Gregory hated it, he hated it, he hated it!

"God!" Clara gasped.

"You're doing so good! Just a little more, you're doing so good!" William sounded energetic, pleased even.

"Too big..." She whined, making the hare's ears droop lower. This was too much!

"Nonsense, you've got this, Clara. I'm almost there." He replied.

Thank God, Gregory thought. As awful and painful this was for him to experience, at least it would be over soon! Clara grunted roughly, followed by a strained noise of discomfort. The creaking of the bed quickened, his wife whimpering louder, then it suddenly stopped while the Doberman exhaled long and hard. Moments passed them all by, and after a while Gregory was beginning to think that it was done. The Doberman had finished.

"See? I knew you could do it." The dog said, sounding so satisfied with himself.

"Big..." She repeated, still speaking in a low whisper.

"I know, but you did it. I knew you could." He told her softly.

Gregory dared to open his eyes again, hoping to see the pair ending things now that it was finally done. The Doberman was still hunched over his wife, Clara hardly visible except for her legs sticking out from between the doctor's. Neither seemed to be doing much more than breathe until the Doberman made to stand, taking his knee off the bed and... sliding himself out of Clara. He didn't so much see it as heard it, a very subtle sound of something slipping wetly, and then she let out a quiet gasp.

"You were so worried before." The big dog told her as he stepped to the side. He took her by the hips and gently rolled her over onto her back so both men could see her from the front, and then he climbed onto the bed with her. He sat down beside her, Gregory now feeling his emotions flatten out. As much as he ached on the inside, he was beginning to feel numb all over, desensitized to everything occurring on the other side the thin closet door.

His wife lay there next to the man that had once been their mutual doctor, legs now spread. Her chest was slowly rising and falling as she reached a hand down to touch herself between the legs, feeling at her own folds with her fingertips. Her lips were damp and slick with a clear liquid.

"I did tell you that you wouldn't break." The Doberman chuckled, and the numbness Gregory felt gave way just enough for him to feel a fresh wave of shame. The old dog, taller and larger than him, still had an erection. Long, thick, and slick with a thin layer of wetness, the Doberman was hung in every sense of the word. This was not a man Gregory could compare himself to in the bedroom, and in his despair, Gregory felt that it was almost fitting that his wife would seek out another dog to give her a child that was as capable as William.

"You... did..." Clara finally agreed with a slow whisper. She moved then, drawing her legs together, recovering some of her modesty.

"You took me down to here." He told her, shaping his thumb and trigger finger into a circle and wrapping it around his shaft before sliding his hand down to his half-swollen knot. Clara did turn her head, and she did look, her eyes widening slightly at the truth being revealed. Gregory felt a little lost, the sea of numbness he was swimming in may have been obscuring his reason. He felt like he was missing a part of a larger picture, and he probably was. He didn't know every word the pair had spoken to each other; all he knew was what they'd said to each other in this room.

"You'll do fine, Clara. I promise." The Doberman reassured her, and she reluctantly nodded.

"H-how long?" She asked him.

"My cock?" He replied in question, and when she looked away with a look of shame the Doberman chuckled. "I'm sorry, Clara. I know what you're asking, I just couldn't resist. Usually ten to twenty minutes, like I told you before, but it could be less. You are very tight."

"Ok..." She breathed it out, then spread her legs again, drawing her arms up to cover her chest.

"You're ready?" He asked her to confirm.

She nodded. When she was finished giving her reluctant blessing the Doberman took his cue and began to roll his body over to crawl back on top of her, and Gregory watched in muted confusion. He'd thought they'd finished? Hadn't he finished inside her before? The Doberman grabbed her legs behind the knees and drew her legs upright, then folded them down across Clara's chest before swinging his one leg over her until he was left straddling her with a knee planted on the bed to her either side. Behind him was his cock, long and thick, and very wet from before. Gregory couldn't see his wife anymore, apart from her bare feet stick up into view from behind the Doberman's broad shoulders.

William lifted himself up, grabbing his cock around the middle so he could aim his tip at her entrance. His large nuts hung heavily behind him, looking like lead weighted eggs in a tight sac of flesh. Had this happened minutes before Gregory would have wept behind shut eyes, but he was too numb now. He felt dead inside as he watched through the thin gaps of the wooden slats. The old dog pressed his tip against her entrance and started to descend.

His wife's playlist finished playing the last song in the list, and looped back to the beginning, like a joke being played at her husband's expense. The song that played was one Clara's favorites, probably why it was at the top of her playlist. An upbeat pop song began to play, its quick tempo dropping alongside lyrics about a happy and prosperous future.

The Doberman sank the rest of way down until his balls hid his cock and Clara's pussy from view. She let out a sharp grunt when the old dog's hips clapped against hers. Gregory watched as the Doberman wiggled his hips against hers, like a golfer getting ready to make their swing.

"Open your eyes, Clara." William said, and Gregory had no way to know if his wife had complied, but the old dog's next words implied that she had.

"Remember how I promised you'd have a baby?" He continued.

"Yes." She replied quietly beneath the upbeat music.

"Now, are you going to let me fuck a puppy into you like you promised me?" He asked.

A moment passed between the pair where not a word was spoken.

"Please." She whimpered.

"That's a good girl, Clara." The Doberman replied, his voice warm and dripping with satisfaction. "And to answer your question, it's fourteen inches."

He lifted his hips sharply and dropped them, forcing a yelp from Clara. The old dog started fucking her, putting his back into it, the rise and fall of his hips like a raucous applause as their bodies collided wetly. The dog's heavy nuts slapped against the back of Clara's ass while his shaft pistoned in and out of her tight caress like a wet slurry of spit.

Clara was shouting, her volume drowning out the noise of the upbeat music, knocking the lyrics of a bright tomorrow into the background as the brutal present revealed its dominance just as William revealed himself as a force of nature. Whatever warmth and tenderness he'd used to seduce his wife was quickly shed as the Doberman slammed his body against hers with as much force as he could muster, leaving the bed quaking and creaking rapidly with every thrust.

Below him, Clara was thrashing, her legs squirming over his shoulders, her hands pawing something at his front until they appeared at his sides. At first, it looked like she was trying to push him away, her voice not filled with words, but just guttural shouts and grunts as the wind was knocked out of her with every descent of the dog's powerful hips.

"Thank Christ, you're tight!" William grunted, his breathing labored and hot.

"Guh-God, William!" Clara spat out her first words, forced and difficult as she endured the power of his hips.

Gregory, meanwhile, was experience the death of his own identity. The numbness he felt from head to toe was now absolute as he dumbly watched through the slats. His identity, his whole world, melted like ice in the summer. His role of husband, lover, companion, all vanished one by one as he watched another man take them from him with quick vicious thrusts.

"William!" She shouted, not so much as an exaltation of the pleasure he was giving her, but more like the panicked cry of a woman on a roller coaster, fear and adrenaline in a blender of motion as she held on for dear life to the protective bars keeping her inside the car at all times. She screamed, she shouted, grunted, yelped. These were noises Gregory had never heard come from her mouth before, like a different side of his wife had been hidden from him until now.

"Beg me, Clara!" he growled down at her, his head dropping low towards her own, her legs sticking straight up with her toes spreading wide and curling as he fucked her wildly.

"William!" She screamed his name.

"Beg me to knock you up! Let me hear it, help push me over the edge!" He ordered her, growling to snarling, the old dog dominating her smaller body with his own, his voice powerful, his lust absolute. Gregory watched as his wife gave into the old dog, giving him the conquest, he'd clearly been working at for weeks, months, maybe even years since that last terrible visit to Dr Maxwell's office.

"Please! Do it!" She cried out, her hands leaving his sides to wrap around his back, her fingertips digging into his fur.

"Say it! Every word!" He slammed his hips hard into her, forcing a noise out of her mouth like a mix of a grunt and a gurgle, every drop of air squeezed out of her, and right after a sharp inhale like she was drawing in the final breathe of air required to put the nail in her husband's coffin.

"Knock me up! Please! Breed me!" She screamed, sending a shiver down Gregory's spine as the words hit him like bullets. The lightning of her voice had struck him deep, awakening the pain and bubbling it back up to the surface until fresh tears formed at the corners of his eyes.

"That's it, more! Keep it going, make me cum, Clara!" William snarled down at her.

"Cum in me! Cum in me, William, knock me up! I need it!" She kept screaming. This wasn't even begging anymore, as begging was an act of submission, of defeat.

Gregory listened as his wife screamed like a woman scorned, hard and powerful, demanding, a stomp of the foot on hard tile, the clack of a heel echoing through a room as her voice echoed in the guest bedroom.

“Fuck your pups into me, fuck me, fuck me, fuck me!” And he fucked her, and he fucked her, and he fucked her.

There was no concept of time for Gregory as he watched the old dog plow his wife with wild abandon. Their language was crude, harsh, carnal, but also simple. Breed me, take it, knock me up, take it slut, give me puppies, you’re a whore. With each violent breath they took, with every foul epithet, the Doberman’s balls drew higher up his body until at last the swell of his engorged knot came into view like a red sun rising over the horizon.

It squished and smashed against Clara’s battered entrance, the wet noise of their union like a wet hand slapping at the water’s surface. The bed spring creaking and squealing, the bed rocking roughly under the big dog’s thrusts. Gregory watched as his wife’s pussy parted wider while she screamed William’s name again, long and loud as she shuddered under the Doberman, cumming like a fountain. Her pussy drenched the old dog’s balls, giving him the last bit of lubrication he needed.

His knot popped inside her, sudden and sharp, Clara freezing stiff the second it happened, her voice going silent with shock and awe. William went silent, too, as if both canines had reached nirvana, but their moment of enlightenment ended roughly and abruptly when the dog suddenly began to snarl, punching his hips into Clara with renewed violence, and Clara joined him by clawing violently at his back.

“Fucking William!” She screamed, the dog hunching down over her, burying her completely under him as his humped against her as hard he could, his fat and heavy balls now tightly hugging up against his body, the skin of his sac scrunching up, his taint flexing like a beating heart. With the dog’s next grunt, he signaled his climax, snarling out more verbal filth as he finalized the promise he’d made to Clara.

His nuts jerked violently, a vicious throb that started at his taint, as that spot behind his balls flexed especially hard, running through both nuts as the two orbs delivered the first of their heavy payload, and then came the first rope of seed that would ensure Clara’s pregnancy.

Gregory could hear it. A loud, almost sharp noise like ketchup spitting from a squeezed bottle. She screamed sharply when it hit her, surely pelting her square in the cervix before a second rope joined it. Gregory, silent and pale, could count the number of times that the old dog fed his wife’s womb a dose of his seed. The intercourse that was on display wasn’t romantic at all, just two people given fully over to their base instincts, rutting like animals as they snarled and clawed away at their dignity until at last William slowed his thrusts and began to sag across Clara’s now limp body.

Her hands still clawed at his back, fingers curled and stiff like hooks as she clung to the larger dog, his nuts quietly twitching behind him as a thin river of cum oozed down the crack of her ass and onto the bed below.

It was finally over, and Gregory could at last relax knowing that what was done, was done. He felt wrung dry, washed up, totally hollowed out both physically and emotionally. Several minutes after

the pair had finally come to a stop he lifted himself back up until he was sitting on his knees, no doubt still tied to Clara, who was still laid out on her back.

The raw intensity of their union was gone now, just a slow glimmering ember as William carefully lowered her legs down off his shoulders so they could wrap casually around his waist while they waited for him to shrink. The two weren't even saying anything, just panting and recovering.

"Thank you." Gregory heard Clara whisper, though just barely. The music once again was the dominant sound in the room as the pair put their composure back together.

"You're very welcome. Just look at you, looking like a mother already." The dog said, doing something with his hands in front of him where Gregory couldn't see.

Next thing, the old dog was stretching his back, his spine audibly popping before he began to lift himself up onto his knees. Both dogs grunted from the gesture, the bigger dog moving slowly while the smaller dog stuck to him was dragged along until he rolled himself over onto his back with Clara coming to rest on top of him, glued to his hips by the sheer size of his knot. With the pair now lying lengthways on the bed Gregory could see what the older dog had meant. Clara's stomach looked positively swollen, like she was at last beginning to show the pregnancy she so desperately wanted. Of course, this wasn't a baby bump Gregory was seeing, but just the evidence of how much William had put inside of Clara to make sure she would be showing a few months from now.

So, it really was done. Clara was getting what she wanted from a man who knew how to deliver it.

"Are you sure?" She asked, touching her hand gently to her taut looking stomach, looking exhausted from head to toe with damp spots under her cheeks like she'd been crying. Maybe she had been, probably from the joy of creation, but the expression she wore, and her eyes, left Gregory feeling dirty. Her cheating on her husband must be on her mind, must have been on her mind this entire time and now that she was going to be pregnant, she'd have to confront that reality eventually with Gregory. When she tells her infertile husband that she's pregnant.

"You can't have better swimmers than mine, Clara. I used my own sperm as evidence in my senior thesis on male virility." He replied, the smugness of his voice as apparent as the volume of that same sperm in Clara's belly.

Thankfully, Clara had nothing to say in reply to the other dog's bragging. She just sat in William's lap and quietly admired the swell of her own stomach as they waited for the knot to shrink.

"If you're worried that it might not take, we can try again soon as my knot shrinks enough for me to start thrusting again." William told her, and unfortunately for Gregory, Clara nodded in reply, and the hare spent the rest of the night watching his wife give herself up to the good doctor again and again, William proving to everyone in the room that old dogs have tricks of their own.

“Oh, my goodness, you’re so upset!” the nurse said loudly and affectionately as she finished wiping away at the newborn’s face, the baby crying as loud as he could while his mother waited nearby in the hospital bed. Soon as she was done the nurse lifted the baby up and carried him back over to his mother.

Clara, to her credit, looked like she was holding up well for a woman who had just given natural birth to twin boys. The nurse handed the second of the two boys to their mother, and now she laid there in her bed content and happy with two crying babies in her arms.

To her left side was Gregory, who’d been with her in the room the entire time to hold her hand and give her support while the delivery doctor and his team of nurses took care of the rest of the work, apart from the pushing of course. Clara did excellently, according to their doctor. Two very healthy babies and Clara wasn’t any worse for wear. At the moment they were being told that she wouldn’t need to stay in the hospital for too much longer before she and the boys could be discharged. The guest bedroom at home had long since been converted back into a baby room and was ready for its future occupants to settle in for good.

“My sweet babies.” Clara cooed down to the two little black and brown faces, both little pups looking just like their mother. They weren’t crying now that they were both in their mother’s arms and next to each other. The twins had good reason to cry their little hearts out. Those first minutes out of the womb, in the cold hospital air, and no brother next to them, were probably terrifying, but now they were back in their mother’s warm embrace.

“Our beautiful boys.” Gregory added, reaching out to touch one of the boy’s little hands with his fingertip. The child actually grabbed the end of his finger and Clara looked delighted at the interaction.

The doctor and nurses were mostly minding their own business, taking care of things that didn’t need Clara or Gregory. Now that the boys were out of her, she’d been checked and cleaned up and was free to lay her legs down normally so she could rest. Though the birth wasn’t the longest on record, the twins were big babies and so their mother was exhausted. Even through her smile Gregory could see that she’d be out like a light if she let her eyes close for too long.

Looking down at his new family Gregory didn’t feel so cold inside. These were two little bright and shining lives that he could raise as his own. This was something he couldn’t do any other way, the universe hadn’t dealt him the right cards to be a father, but that didn’t stop fatherhood from coming to him anyway. He looked up from his sons and at his wife, and she looked up at him when she noticed.

“Did you figure your name out yet?” She asked, reminding him that they were to each name one of their boys. Clara had decided on Jeffrey Scott, and Gregory was torn between two options. Naming one of his sons was an important matter, so he was hesitating on what to choose.

"No." He laughed.

"Greg! We have to tell them something or they won't be able to make a birth certificate." She reminded him, and he nodded. She was right. He'd have to just force his own hand when the hospital came to finalize their information before sending it off to the printers.

Across the room there was a knock on the door and one of the nurses answered it. Now that the expectant mother was no longer expecting, and was formally a mother, she was decent enough to permit visitation by the hospital staff. Both Gregory's and Clara's families were all be waiting in a nearby lobby, but the plan was for Gregory to wheel Clara out in a wheelchair with both boys cradled in her arms. So, neither of them knew who it could be that would be trying to visit them in the delivery room.

In stepped a tall, dark canine, garbed in plain khakis and a button down with his long white doctor's coat.

"I hope I'm not interrupting. These are two old patients of mine and I wanted to congratulate them." Dr Maxwell told the nurse, who then turned to look towards the new parents.

Gregory felt cold inside. This was the first time he'd seen the old dog since the twins were conceived. He looked to Clara, who outwardly did not seem upset at seeing the father of her children, but her voice betrayed her when she answered.

"Yes, Dr Maxwell, you can come in." She said, turning to look at Gregory with a smile. For a brief moment she had a look of worry. Had Gregory not known of her infidelity he would have assumed she was afraid her husband might be upset at this moment of privacy being broken by a visitor, but he knew the real reason she was worried.

For the last nine months Clara had been a nervous wreck. She played it off as being her hormones, stress about the babies, the usual suspects that expecting mothers would use when they're pregnant. But Gregory understood that between the truisms of pregnancy were the lies she was telling. He remembered the look of fear etched on her face when she finally confessed that she was pregnant. He remembered her look of relief when he played along, acting excited that the impossible had happened. The look of dread when she the first ultrasound revealed that an infertile man had not only put one child in her, but two.

"Of course, come in, Dr!" Gregory wore a confident face. He'd gotten good at wearing that face in the many months since his life threatened to come apart at the seams. The good doctor smiled and stepped further inside and chose to stand on the opposite side of the bed from Gregory.

"You know, I take great pride in my work, and when I make a diagnosis, I stand by it 100%, but I can't tell you enough how glad it makes me feel when I discover I was wrong." The dog said, putting both hands on the railing of the bed to look down at the two little boys. Gregory watched the old dog smile warmly at 'his' sons before the dog looked back up to Clara. They shared a knowing glance with each other before Dr Maxwell looked up to Gregory and gave an affirming nod. This whole exchange

would have felt so different had Gregory not known, but he did know. He'd gotten good at pretending that he didn't know a thing.

"Well, it did take about four years of trying, Dr so don't sell yourself short." Gregory cracked a joke at his own expense that left the door open for the other man to chuckle.

Clara smiled warmly, authentic warmth at the old dog, then looked back down to her two new sons. He couldn't blame her for being happy. She finally had the family she wanted, the chance to hear the pitter patter of little feet running through the halls of their home and judging by Dr Maxwell's build Gregory felt he'd have a lot of games of catch to play in his future. Maybe even football or soccer. That'd be all right, he guessed. He'd have to start watching ESPN to prepare, since he wasn't much of a sports guy himself.

"Well, I won't keep you two any longer. I know you're exhausted." Dr Maxwell said then, looking down to deliver his last line directly to Clara.

"And you're about to be exhausted when you get home and discover how much work twins are going to be!" The doctor then told Gregory, and one of the nurses who'd been listening in laughed in another part of the room. Twins were going to be a lot of work, as Gregory had been told endlessly by everyone he knew that had children.

The old dog stuck his hand out across the bed, extending it to Gregory. There was the briefest of pauses before Gregory extended his own. The two men shook.

"Congratulations, both of you! And if you ever want to grow the family some more, and don't want to wait four years, my office is always open." The dog replied with a smile, and a nod down to Clara before excusing himself from the room. Gregory felt a sharp winter chill run up and down his spine. Neither of them had replied to what the doctor had said, but Gregory knew what was being offered.

If Clara wanted another baby, she just needed to give Dr Maxwell a call. Gregory looked back down to his 'sons', and Clara did the same.

"Can I hold him?" He asked, pointing to the boy that he was supposed to be naming. Clara had named their firstborn, and Gregory would name the second. Of course, she invited him to pick up his son, and very carefully he did. The baby didn't start crying like he'd feared. Both boys looked like they were tired, which was weird since neither of them had to do much of anything besides show up.

He still had to name this one. There was a part of him, deep inside Gregory, which was waking up to the realizing that he was a father now. A year ago he'd have thought that part of him had died. Dead and buried. But now he had one of his sons in his arms, a tiny little sleepy face that would one day call him daddy. That part of him was renewed, alive and happy. He could understand the joy and the relief that Clara must be feeling. The part of her that wanted to be a mother was satisfied right now; it'd

gotten what it wanted. Now, that part of Gregory that had been long dormant was getting what it wanted, too, and it was a warm and happy feeling. He understood.

"I think I know." He said, committing fully to a decision. Not just for his son, but his own future.

"Oh, about time." She smiled up at him.

He looked back down at his son, the small face too young for Gregory to tell how much of Clara was there and how much of his dad.

"Please don't say Roy Rogers." She teased when she saw her husband hesitating.

"William Maxwell."

Clara went dead silent, her eyes suddenly very wide. One of the nurses nearby noticed and glanced over curiously.

"I don't think we'd be celebrating this today if it weren't for us going to see Dr Maxwell for treatment." He lied for the benefit of the nurse in the room. "And I'm partial to the nickname, Max."

"Oh, I- I mean, if you're sure, baby." She replied, sounding suddenly very nervous and uncertain though she was desperately trying to hide it.

"Mr. and Mrs. Evans?" A new face, another nurse interrupted them both.

They and the nurse then spoke for a few minutes about medical matters, all of which were good, and they went over some paperwork that needed doing. It all went very smoothly, and then it was decided that Gregory would soon be wheeling Clara out to see their families in a few minutes. The nurse just needed to get a wheelchair. By the time the nurse excused herself, the other staff had also departed and for the first time in hours the two of them were alone.

"I am sure, Clara. About the name" He told his wife, picking up from where they left off.

And since they were alone...

"I also think that if we ever decide that we want to start trying again that you should go back to see Dr Maxwell, since we know his methods work." He told her. She was speechless, the dark fur of face pitifully hiding how pale her skin had become underneath it. A sensation of catharsis washed over him as he saw Clara remain silent as the dawning realization hit her that her husband knew.

"We can talk about it later, but just know that I'm happy that you gave me two sons." He told her, his words twisting like a knife.

That part of Gregory that had wanted to barge in, all fire and brimstone, confronting his wife head on, that part of him was feeling awfully smug at finally getting its way. Clara was crying when he wheeled her out to see the family, and to everyone involved it looked like a mother crying tears of joy as she showed off her two new beautiful babies.

But Gregory knew, and now she did, too.