

Prelude:

What would you do if you found a book, a journal hidden away, filled with secrets—things you weren't meant to know; things you should've known from the beginning?

So the question remains, how well does anyone really know his or her own spouse, sister, brother, mother, or father?

You could be living under the same roof for five, ten, even twenty years, and not really know one another. Even before they became your significant other, did their parents or siblings know them better than anyone else did? *Did your family keep things hidden?*

Siblings don't always share their secrets with each other. They are not close. They most likely won't get along with one another until they become adults, and still maybe even then, not see eye to eye!

What if you're an only child, no one with which to share anything? *What if* one day you're all alone? Your parents or spouse dies, goes to heaven, and you one-day stumble across a secret that your so-called loved ones have been hiding from you. What would you do? Of course, you would read it. You wouldn't be able to help yourself. You would be too curious the moment you opened the book and read the first line. Especially, if you saw your name written as one of the words.

What if everything you thought you knew about *your family, your spouse, your lover* were all lies? Something they thought was better kept hidden from the one person they supposedly loved the most.

Even then, no one really knows anyone, do they?

Chapter

1

I opened the rear door of my grey Infiniti Sedan and grabbed my briefcase. I decided this morning I'd have my second graders work on an art project about what they did over their long weekend. I, on the other hand, had spent most of my time on the sofa with my feet elevated.

I was nearly six months pregnant and feeling the fatigue in my legs and feet. My job as a schoolteacher had me standing for long periods at a time. I knew I'd eventually have to start teaching my pupils from my chair, as much as possible.

A strong breeze ruffled my light brown shoulder-length hair. I brushed the hair away from my eyes, tucking several strands behind my ear. I closed the rear car door and made my way inside the school.

Every morning, I'd stop at the front office to gather papers from my mailbox and chat with my friend, Veronica Rowan.

Veronica was a secretary in the front office. She answered the phones and assisted anyone that came into the office needing help or advice about school-related issues. She also helped with daily tasks, when needed.

When my husband Tim and I moved from Florida to Illinois after college, I didn't know anyone in town. The first time I had met Veronica was when I started teaching at Haven Elementary—ten years ago.

I considered Veronica a good friend. Not a best friend, like my two friends Alexis and Ashley, but still a friend no less. I am a person with trust issues, dating back to my teens. Once I made the choice of trusting you and accepting you into my life, you became someone dear to me. The worst mistake anyone could make was to betray that trust, break that bond! A cheating boyfriend with your best friend would do that to you. As I got older, I knew who my friends really were. Too many times, I was burned and left to pick up the pieces.

Once a month, Veronica and I would accompany each other to the library for our mystery book club. On occasion, we'd get together for dinner at my house or sometimes, Veronica's. Veronica's boyfriend Pat Atkins, who worked with Tim at a law firm they both leased and

shared, would play pool downstairs in the man cave, while the two of us sat and talked about the latest fashion, school, and the next book we were going to read.

“Good morning, Carla,” Veronica sang.

“Good morning,” I replied, smiling back at her.

“Oh!” Veronica shrieked. “I love your dress. It’s perfect for the weather we’ve been having.” Her blue eyes sparkled in the fluorescent light.

“Thank you. I’ve been wanting to wear it before I got too big.” This morning I had chosen a maternity dress with a floral design that flowed past my knees. I usually wore maternity pants, but with the temperatures reaching the mid-seventies to eighties these past few days in February, of all months, I wanted to stay as comfortable as possible.

“Yes. A little too warm for this time of year, but I won’t complain,” I expressed. *Even though I was from Ohio, I honestly missed living in Florida where the days are always warm;* the thought lingered in my mind.

The phone rang before Veronica could reply. She raised her pointer finger to me, indicating to give her a minute. As Veronica talked on the phone, I whispered that I’d see her later and waved goodbye. Veronica nodded and continued her conversation on the phone, while twisting her finger in a lock of sandy blonde hair, resting on her shoulder.

I left the office and walked down the hall towards my classroom. My eyes sketched over the drawings that were hung on the wall between each classroom. The pictures taped to the wall told me what was taught in that specific class. The science room, where the third graders were taught, had poster boards with different types of weather on them.

Social Studies, also done by third graders, had photos of every president that had served in the United States, and on the other side of the door hung the Declaration of Independence.

When I came to the next room, I stopped and admired the drawings on the wall. My second graders drew the pictures. I couldn’t get over how imaginative they were at such a young age. Their dreams expressed and painted on paper.

For a moment, my thoughts went to my unborn child. Him or her, what would they grow up to be? There were many possibilities, of course. Every day that I’d spent teaching the next generation gave my life meaning. I smiled, unlocked the door to the room, and flipped on the lights.

Before leaving for the long weekend, I'd written, "*Good morning second graders,*" on the blackboard. I always thought of my students as my own and wanted them to feel comfortable and not overwhelmed in my class.

I made my way to the desk in front of me and opened the bottom drawer. Taking the straps of my purse off my shoulder, I set the bag inside and closed it. I laid my briefcase on the desk and pushed the buttons, until I heard a *click*. I took out the graded papers I did over the weekend and closed the lid, setting the case under the desk.

Within a few minutes, all of the students would arrive at school. I walked to the back of the room, grabbed a handful of colored drawing paper, and started placing one sheet on each desk.

The desks were placed four in a group so the children could interact with one another. Each desk had the student's name written on colored paper and taped neatly at the top. When I finished, I stood at the chalkboard, writing five new words for my students to learn.

The room was quiet, except for the *clacking* of the chalk hitting the chalkboard. My mind focused only on what I was doing and nothing else. At peace with myself before my students were to arrive and fill the empty room.

I was so engrossed in my work that I didn't hear or see the little girl standing in the doorway. I jumped, my heart pounding beneath my dress, when I heard the young voice speak to me.

"Good morning, Mrs. Michaels," the little girl greeted.

I quickly turned, grabbing the ledge of the blackboard. Once I saw who it was, I smiled and exhaled the breath I was holding. Ever since my pregnancy, I'd become easier to scare. Something I'd have to get accustomed to.

"Good morning to you too, Samantha. How was your weekend?"

The smile on Samantha's face turned to a frown from what I'd asked. Samantha with her wavy dirty-blonde hair, shrugged her shoulders, and without saying another word, turned and walked to the back of the room. She placed her paper bag lunch in a bin at the back of the class and took her seat.

I wasn't surprised that Samantha was the first to arrive. In fact, I'd be more concerned if she weren't here.

I watched as Samantha took her seat, looked at her hands, and then a single tear slid down her face. This wasn't the first time I'd seen her cry, but I wished it was the last. Something

inside me told me things were not going well at home. I'd noticed bruises on her arms and legs. When I had asked Samantha what had happened, she had replied that she fell off her bike or tripped over her toys that she'd left in the middle of the floor.

Of course, I thought for sure Samantha was lying to me. That she didn't want me as her teacher to know what really happened to her. I felt certain that Samantha was being abused. When I confronted Principal Steve Clapton, he said he'd look into the situation and get back to me, but that had been weeks ago.

I walked up behind Samantha and combed my fingers gently over the girl's soft waves. I placed a tissue in Samantha's hand, and then whispered in her ear that everything would be all right and that I was here, if she needed someone to talk to. Samantha smiled, wiped the tears from her face and shoved the Kleenex in the pocket of her shorts.

Throughout the day as I taught my students, I kept my eye on Samantha. I wished with all my heart I could protect her from whomever was hurting her.

A thought came to me while I was at lunch. I'd send a note home with Samantha, requesting that her parents meet with me. I would start with how well Samantha was doing in my class, and then *finesse* in some questions about the bruises I'd noticed. If their story matched Samantha's, then I'd *try* to believe that they weren't abusing her.

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The bell rang and I quickly glanced up at the clock. I couldn't believe how fast the day had flown by. It felt like the students had just arrived, and now they were going home for the day.

Mrs. Larson from across the hall came over and gathered up the students. I was relieved it was Mrs. Larson's day to take the kids to the buses. I was feeling extremely tired and was looking forward to putting my feet up when I got home.

Before the children left, I handed Samantha an envelope and requested that she give it to her parents when she arrived home from school. Samantha's face clouded over with fear, but I reassured her that it was nothing to worry about. That I just wanted to meet with her mom and dad, and inform them of Samantha's accomplishments and how proud I was of her and her artwork. Samantha then smiled and hurried out of the room with the other children to catch their bus.

After collecting the drawings from each desk, I made my way towards the front of the classroom. This morning I'd thought I felt a *twinge*, maybe a little pain. *But*, I had stopped worrying or at least I'd tried. I didn't want to be one of those emotional pregnant women, filled with uneasiness. Even though I had reason to worry, this being my fifth pregnancy and the only one I'd carried this far into term.

Before I could reach the desk, I grabbed my belly as pain shot up through my mid-section, feeling like I'd been stabbed with a knife. Not that I'd ever been stabbed before, but this had to be the sensation.

My knees buckled from under me and I fell to the floor. Kneeling on all fours, I lifted my right hand to my belly. Warmth rolled down the length of my inner thigh. Using the hand that held my bulging belly, I maneuvered my body just enough to lift the floral print maternity dress and reached a hand underneath. When I brought my hand back in front of me, I saw red blood covering my fair skin.

My thoughts hazed over and returned to the children I taught. Class had ended and my students had left, just mere minutes ago. Second graders with all the other tragedies they would witness as they aged, shouldn't have to see their teacher like this.

"No!" I gasped, as shooting pain spiraled through me. "This can't be happening! Not now, not again!"

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As my mind desperately fought against what I knew my body was doing—trying to reject my baby—I couldn't help but remember all I had been through. It flashed through my thoughts in quick, jagged scenes that showed the heartbreak I had been through that I was so sure this was a thing of the past. *Was the past coming back to haunt me again?*

Dr. Shaffer, my OB/GYN, had told me that everything was moving along as planned. I wasn't having any morning sickness or complications. I was told the baby was fine, that everything *seemed* fine. My past pregnancies, I'd never made it to the second trimester.

When I asked about being tested, the doctor had first told me that since it was my first miscarriage, he couldn't test me unless I continued to have them. The doctor assured me that many women had miscarriages; it was just the body's way of rejecting the fetus, if there was something wrong with the fetus or the pregnancy. The doctor explained that sometimes a

healthy embryo could be rejected if it had adhered to an area in the womb, which wouldn't allow the fetus to develop correctly.

"This doesn't happen often," Dr. Shaffer had explained, "and usually it's only with a first pregnancy. If you continue to miscarry then we will run tests to determine if there is something wrong with your embryonic eggs or the health of the womb itself."

After the second miscarriage, the doctor ran a few tests, but every time he'd found nothing wrong. As time went by, I started having abdominal pain. Sometimes the pain was so intense, I had to crawl on my hands and knees to get from one room to the other. That's when the doctor requested a laparoscopy to be performed.

After the surgery, the doctor informed me and my husband that I had Endometriosis and scar tissue throughout my abdominal area. He concluded that he removed all of the Endometriosis and scar tissue, and that I should be fine now and would be able to get pregnant without any more complications. Three-months later, I got pregnant, but lost that baby as well. Eight years of trying and five pregnancies later, I'd made it to my sixth month, almost to the third trimester.



Holding one hand on my belly, I inched my way to the front of the classroom. I reached for the corner of the desk and pulled myself up. The school phone lay just out of my reach.

I slowly made my way around the left side of the desk and slid my hand across the top towards the phone, while the right hand hugged the life inside me. Shooting pains came and went, but I could feel that the blood continued to seep.

A sharp cramp caused me to knock the phone out of its cradle as I screamed out in pain. I didn't know if I had time to call my husband Tim and tell him what was happening. I knew I needed to get to the hospital, now—before it was too late. I pressed the speaker button and dialed the front office, waiting for Veronica to answer.

"Hey, I was just about to call you and see if you wanted to go to the bookstore with me," Veronica said, her voice high and perky.

"Veronica, I need help," I cried out. "Something's wrong with the baby!"

"Oh, my God! Are you going into labor? Oh, my God, oh, my God," Veronica kept shouting into the phone.

“I don’t know. There’s so much blood. Hurry, please!” I shouted.

Another contraction ripped through my abdomen, making me scream out in pain. My legs went weak and I took a step forward. My right foot caught the edge of the briefcase sticking out from under the desk. I went down, my head *whacked* the corner of the desk, and I fell to the floor. All went black...

Chapter

2

I opened my eyes and breathed in the cool stale air around me. My throat was parched and my mouth tasted of cotton. At first, I wasn't sure where I was, but the smell of antiseptic entering my nostrils quickly defused the uncertainty.

I placed my hand gently on the right side of my head that ached. I sucked in a quick breath from the touch and tried to remember what had happened to me. My mind drew a blank. I didn't even know what day it was. How long I'd been in the hospital.

When my eyes adjusted to the light, I saw my husband sitting hunched over in a chair next to the bed, his face resting in his hands.

His short brown hair looked unruly; as he lifted his head and glanced over at me, a small smile surfaced. The wetness in his blue eyes glistened in the light. I wasn't sure if he'd been crying, though the redness in his eyes told me he had.

He moved towards me and kissed my lips, then gently grazed his finger across my forehead, brushing the hair away.

"You're finally awake?" he whispered. "How are you feeling?"

"Okay, I guess. A little thirsty," I grumbled, and then swallowed as I tried to moisten my dry throat. "How long have I been in the hospital?"

"One night. You were brought in yesterday afternoon, and have been unconscious until just now," he replied.

I watched as he stood and walked to a table on the other side of the room and poured a glass of water. I pushed a button on the side of the bed, making it rise. Tim helped me sit up and then handed me the plastic cup. After taking several big gulps, I handed the glass back to him half empty.

It was then that I noticed how flat the blankets lay upon me. I reached my hand to my belly and quickly turned my head towards Tim.

I watched as his lips parted, but he said nothing. Part of me didn't want to ask, to know that I'd lost yet another baby. We stared at each other, neither one saying a word. It wasn't like we hadn't been here before, but not knowing made me feel...uneasy.

"I'm sorry," I whimpered like a sad puppy, feeling like my world was falling apart around me, again.

"Sorry for what?" Tim questioned, as he sat back in the chair.

"For not being able to give you a child." Tears filled my eyes, and then slid down my cheeks. My husband looked shocked somehow by what I'd said. More of a, "*What are you talking about?*" look.

Tim inhaled deeply. "She's in NICU, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit," he replied, watching as a puzzled look appeared on my face.

"The...the baby's alive?" The words stuck in my throat before registering in my mind. This was wonderful news!

"Yes, we have a daughter," he replied, giving me a somewhat forced smile.

"A daughter? Have you seen her?" My heart quickened, filling my body with excitement.

"Yes. One of the nurses that came in to check on you asked if I'd seen our baby. When I replied, *I hadn't*, she took me to see her."

"We have a baby girl. She's...she's alive?" I breathed, still in shock that the baby had survived at all.

Everything that had happened came flooding back. The pain, the blood—I was certain when I saw all that blood that I'd lost the baby. *But* I hadn't. This time the baby survived and was down the hall waiting for her mother to come and hold her. I was finally a *Mom*. My face lit up and I couldn't stop myself from smiling. I wanted to jump out of bed and run to her.

"Yes, she's..." he paused. "She's beautiful just like her mother and has your brown hair," Tim finally said.

I wasn't thinking about the occasional pulsating pain I was experiencing. I just wanted to see my baby girl. My daughter was alive and that's all that mattered to me. *Yet*, I could sense there was something Tim wasn't telling me, but wasn't quite sure what it was. I thought I knew my husband well, but there were times I couldn't read his face. He'd close himself off from the world, and I'd have to wait until he was ready to talk to me. I thought he'd be thrilled that this

baby survived, but a part of me started to wonder if there was something more, something I didn't know about—yet.

A tall slim nurse came strolling into the room. I observed as Tim stood, making his way to the window so the nurse could do her job, and he wouldn't be in her way.

"Oh, good! You're awake. I was wondering when you'd open your eyes," the nurse chirped, then flaunted a smile.

"She just woke up a few minutes ago," Tim reported from across the room.

The nurse kept her eyes on me as she took my vitals and wrote them down, "So, have you decided on a name for your baby yet?"

"Yes, Tim and I want to name her Mya Ann," I replied with giddiness in my voice.

"That's such a beautiful name. What made you want to name her Mya Ann?" the nurse asked.

"Because she's my miracle baby," I expressed.

The nurse smiled, "That's so lovely, dear." She patted my hand, then without another word, left the room.

I called to Tim, who seemed to be in another world. "Tim, are you there?" I asked again.

"What? Yeah. Sorry, I didn't hear you calling me," he replied, making his way to the chair and sitting back down.

"The nurse said she'll take me to see our daughter in a few minutes."

Tim smiled, holding my hand in his. "Oh, well..."

"Are you okay? Is there something wrong?" I questioned.

He swallowed, "Not wrong, but there's something I should tell you before you see the baby."

"Okay, what is it?" I searched his face, looking for an answer, but not finding one.

"I want you to be prepared when you see her. She's..."

"She's what?" I whispered, feeling more scared as the seconds ticked by.

"Our baby is in a special open warmer hooked to machines. She's extremely small, and you won't be able to hold her, yet."

I said nothing in return. What was there to say? I had been in this same predicament numerous times before. *But*, this time the baby had survived. *At least for now*, I quickly forced

the negativity away. My eyes moved from Tim's face to his chest, and then I turned my head and stared at the wall in front of me.

Tears slid down my face as grief sunk in. I didn't want to know any more than what he'd already told me. I didn't want to lose this baby, not like the others. I knew I needed to stay positive and not think about Mya dying, but the tears wouldn't stop pouring from my eyes.

Chapter

3

An hour later, the same nurse from earlier came back in the room. “Are you ready to go see your daughter?”

I nodded and waited anxiously for the nurse to help me sit up and get into a wheelchair. The slower I moved, the less pain I caused myself.

Once inside the NICU, I glanced through a large glass window.

The nurse, who had brought me, knelt down beside the wheelchair. “Can you see your daughter?” the tall slim nurse asked.

I nodded, again. It was as if I was at a loss for words. I was seeing Mya for the first time. My eyes filled up with tears once more as I looked at my tiny baby hooked to multiple wires and tubes. I wanted to hold her so badly, but the nurse had told me I couldn’t go inside just yet.

The nurse squeezed my hand, “It’s overwhelming, I know. But you have to understand that your baby was born way too early and has a lot of growing to do.”

I sat quiet, and then said, “Tell me what’s wrong with her.”

The nurse looked at Mya, and then back at me, gazing into my eyes, “Your daughter’s lungs are immature and need respiratory support. Babies at this age also require a ventilator until the lungs can mature enough for them to breathe on their own,” the nurse said, and then looked through the glass window before continuing. “She’s also being fed through a UVC line, which is an IV line through the umbilical vein. Her ability to suck and swallow has not matured enough to feed orally,” the nurse swallowed. “Infections can also be a huge problem, but we are monitoring her every second and have machines telling us what is going on. She’s in good hands, but...but there are other things that can go wrong. Just don’t give up on her; she’s a fighter, I can tell,” the nurse squeezed my hand one more time before looking away.

I could only nod as the tears continued to roll down my face. If nothing else, I had to have faith that this baby would survive.

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Back in my room, there was still no Tim. He'd left earlier after telling me about the baby and hadn't returned. Part of me was worried about him, but also knew that work played a part in his moods sometimes.

I reached for the phone on the nightstand and dialed a number. I needed someone other than my husband to talk to, but ended up leaving a voicemail as my friend Alexis Finley who lived in Florida hadn't answered the phone. I decided to give my other friend Ashley who lived in Ohio a call as well.

Ten minutes later, after I finished talking to my friend Ashley, I could feel there was something going on with her, but hadn't wanted to pry. There was an unfamiliar strangeness in my friend's voice, something she wasn't telling me. On the other hand, maybe things were fine, and I just thought the worst. I didn't want or need to start worrying about something I had no idea about. Besides, Ashley was in Ohio and I was here in Illinois.

I had nothing else to do but listen to everything going on around me. The intercom howled out codes and carts with their squeaky wheels were pushed down the hall outside my room. No one came in to check on me. It was just me and my mind, which wasn't always a bad thing, at least not right now. Not since I was released last year from therapy. All I could think about was my baby and how tiny she looked.

I wasn't in the mood to watch television so I just glanced around the room, my eyes looking at nothing in particular.

I wasn't sure how much time had passed when the phone next to me started to ring. I reached over and grabbed the phone.

"Hello?"

"Carla?" the woman's voice on the other end asked.

"Yes, this is Carla. May I ask who's calling?"

"It's Alexis, Alexis Finley," my friend replied.

"Alexis, oh, my God! It's so nice to hear from you. I take it you got my message?"

"Yes, yes I did. Is everything okay?"

"I'm fine, now," I replied.

"What's wrong? Why are you in the hospital?"

"Well, it's a long story, but to get you up to speed since... what, seven months ago?"

"Yeah, sorry it's been so long."

“Well, I was pregnant and had a daughter.”

“I didn’t know you were pregnant. You didn’t say anything at the funeral,” Alexis questioned.

“That’s because I wasn’t pregnant yet.”

“What do you mean? It’s only been seven months, not nine.”

“I was early. I was only six months pregnant when I went into labor, if you want to call it that.”

“Oh, dear. How is the baby doing?”

“She’s in NICU, right now. They’re doing everything they can for her. All we can do is pray she’ll survive and get stronger.” Tears poured from my eyes as I spoke to my best friend.

Silence filled the line between us. I thought we had been disconnected as I let a few seconds pass between us. My friend Alexis Finley worked for NASA, and I knew she’d been busy with work and hadn’t made the time to call and see how I was doing. And now...now I had to tell Alexis I had a premature baby and didn’t know if she would survive. My friend had enough sadness in her life to worry about. Seven months ago Alexis’s husband Jay, Tim’s best friend, had committed suicide, which was the last time we had spoken.

“Are you still there?” I asked.

“Yes, sorry. I just...I don’t know what to say.”

“You know I call you every few weeks, even if you don’t return my calls,” I reminded.

“I know and I’m sorry for that. I have no excuse for not calling you back. It surprises me that you still call,” Alexis replied.

“Are you kidding? You’re my best friend and I know you work all the time, but you’ll always be my friend no matter what happens. Besides, I knew you were going through a tough time when Jay died and all, but I figured once time passed you’d reach out to me,” I said.

“Carla, I’m so sorry about not being a good friend to you.”

“You are a good friend. What would make you say that? Look, it’s not important. What matters now is that you called me back, and we’re talking?”

“Yes. I guess, you’re right.”

“Yeah, I am.” We both laughed. “So, when do you think you can take off work and come for a visit?” I asked, knowing she’d give me some kind of excuse why she couldn’t come.

The phone went quiet before my friend responded. "I have to go through my schedule first and see what I can do," Alexis quickly added.

"Okay, I guess. I do hope you can make time to see me. I mean us," I replied, hoping my friend would make the trip up to see me.

"I promise to come visit you soon. I just have a few things going on at the moment."

"I'll hold you to that promise."

"I know you will. Well, I better go; I have some things to take care of, and I'll call you soon," Alexis concluded.

"Sounds good. Alexis?"

"Yes."

"Is everything okay with you? You sound like there's something wrong. Something you're not telling me."

"I'm fine, really I am. No need to worry about me. Look, I'll call you soon okay? We'll talk then."

"Sure, I'll talk to you soon." Before I could get the last word out, I heard a *click*.

I held the phone out in front of me, my face looking bewildered. *Had I caught my friend Alexis at a bad time? Or, did Alexis not want to talk to me? Though, she had been the one that called me.* The questions rolled around in my head. I wasn't sure, but decided I'd wait a week or two and call my friend back. Maybe then I could find out what was wrong with Alexis.

My mind wandered back to the first time we'd met in college. I was sitting by myself as I usually did in the library when Alexis walked up to me and asked if she could sit at the table. After a few awkward moments, we started chatting and became friends.

I had told Alexis that I'd moved from Ohio to Florida after I graduated high school to attend the University of Tallahassee. Of course, finding that odd, Alexis had asked why I moved down here when they had great schools up north. I had replied, "The warmer weather, of course." We both had laughed at my response and began an inseparable friendship.

In college, we'd hung out every day after classes and did many things together; even though we were in different classes, we met up at the library and worked on our homework together. After I met Tim, who had become my husband, we continued to hang out. Tim had introduced Alexis to his best friend, Jay Finley. Tim and Jay were both studying to be lawyers, except Jay changed classes and decided to take business and accounting, a year later. Alexis and Jay got

married right after college and started a family, moving to the Cape Canaveral area. Eventually, Alexis got her dream job working at NASA.

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Tim entered the room just as I put the phone back in its cradle and sat down next to me. I took my hand off the phone and turned towards him. I could tell there was something on his mind, but before I could ask, he spoke.

“Hey, how are you feeling?”

“I’m doing better, not as much pain as earlier.”

He reached and pulled my hand to his lips, giving me a gentle kiss. “You know I love you more than life itself, right? And that I would do anything to make sure you’re happy?” His eyes focused on mine.

“Yes, I know. You’ve told me this before. Tim, what’s this all about? Why are you acting so strange?” I knew by the sound of his voice and the jitter of his leg that there was something wrong, something he needed to talk to me about.

“There’s something I need to tell you before the doctor comes in to see you.”

My heart began to speed up from the words he’d just said. *Had something happened to our baby after I’d last seen her? Oh, God, please not my Mya!* I screamed inside my head. I quickly swallowed the bile now rising in my throat, and asked, “What...what is it that you need to talk to me about?” *I didn’t know if I could go through this again,* I thought as I watched him take a long deep breath in, filling up his lungs, and then exhaling.

“When I got to the hospital after I received the call about what had happened to you, I met with the doctor who was on call that delivered our baby. Dr. Brooks said...” Tim paused.

I felt a little relieved that Tim had mentioned yesterday and not the present time. “What did he say?” My eyes searched his face for any kind of answer.

“Carla, he had...” The door to the room swooshed opened and a man wearing a white doctor’s coat came strolling in.

“Hello, Carla, I’m Dr. Eugene Brooks. How are you feeling?”

“I’m feeling better.”

“Has the nurse been in to check your head?”

“She was in here a couple of hours ago, but I don’t recall her checking my head. All she did was write down my vitals and check the machines.”

“I’ll take a look while I’m here.”

“Sure,” I replied.

Dr. Eugene Brooks stood beside me and removed the bandage. “Are you having any dizzy spells?”

“No.”

“You’re not feeling faint or having trouble breathing?”

“No.”

“That’s good. I would like to send you for another CT scan, just to make sure there isn’t any swelling in the cranium. Are you having any abdominal pain?”

“It’s a little sore, but nothing I can’t handle.”

“That’s good. Sometimes when you have a baby like this, it can be somewhat uncomfortable, but to reassure you, it will go away in time. Just try to stay rested and off your feet for the next six weeks,” Dr. Brooks noted.

“Well, okay, I’ll do my best.” I saw Tim look at the floor and then back at me, the muscle in his neck twitching, which is only something he does when he’s nervous or upset.

“Well, if there’s nothing else, I’ll send the nurse in to take you for your CT scan.”

“Actually,” I blurted out, “my husband was just about to tell me something you told him when he came to the hospital yesterday.”

“Oh, what was that?”

“I don’t know, you came into the room just now and he didn’t get to finish telling me.”

Before the doctor could respond, his name came over the intercom. “Dr. Brooks, *code blue* in N108. *Code blue* in room N108,” a woman ordered over the intercom.

“Sorry, I must go.” The doctor quickly ran out the door before he could say anything more.

I looked at my husband, his eyes wide. “What is it?” I asked.

“I’ll be right back,” he replied and quickly bolted out of the room.

I stared at the doorway confused by Tim and the doctor’s quick departure.

Minutes had passed and still no Tim. Just the sounds of people rushing down the hall outside my door.

Thirty minutes later, a nurse with dark hair appeared inside the doorway with a wheelchair.

“Dr. Brooks wants me to take you for some tests,” the nurse stated.

“Oh, okay,” I mumbled, feeling disappointed that Tim hadn’t come back after rushing out of the room.