

Wednesday, May 10, 2017. Newlyweds Kim and Gabe Alexander arrived at their house in Miramar, Florida, after a long Alaskan flight. Kim unlocked the door and started to enter, but Gabe stopped her. He scooped her up in his arms and carried her through the doorway. “Welcome home, wife.”

“That’s the first time you’ve called me your wife.”

“True.”

“Does being married feel different?”

“Not really.”

“Good,” Kim said with a big grin.

“It is strange speaking to you. I’m used to communicating mentally. Want to switch?”

“I enjoy hearing your voice,” Kim answered, nudging Gabe.

“A nice compliment.”

“Our wedding vows stipulated two compliments per day.”

“The real number is fifty for the husband and twenty for the wife. Read the fine print next time.”

“You’re too much.”

Kim needed six more credits to get her master’s degree in design, business, and math at Nova Southeastern University. While she enjoyed school, her dry-cleaning business, Harrington Enterprises, required significant time. They had recently expanded to 35 locations and employed 91 staff members. Kim had hired two excellent people for the main office. Boyd worked on logistics and accounting, while Ellen handled marketing and human resources.

Kim diverted some dry-cleaning profits to help Gabe start his semiconductor business, KimSemi. The month before, they had begun selling a disk controller for Linux servers. Profits were initially low but increased due to marketing and financial assistance from the owners of Gabe’s prior companies, Silicon Serpent and Pacific Progressive Peripherals. Initial customer feedback was excellent, and the company was on track to become self-sufficient in two months.

After unpacking and a quick nap, Gabe and Kim sat down for dinner. Their housekeeper, Anna, had been one of Kim's classmates, and she loved to cook. This evening, she made the South American dish *arroz con pollo y coco*, or rice with chicken and coconut milk.

"When will you tell your mother that we got married?" Kim asked between bites.

"Umm."

Kim slid his cell phone across the table and said, "She's going to be livid at not getting a wedding invite."

"I know," Gabe said with a sigh. "I'm kind of ashamed of not inviting her. It seemed like getting married right then was the best choice."

"Your sister is going to beat you bloody."

"I know."

"You need to tell them something else."

"What?"

"I'm pregnant," Kim answered with a bashful smile.

"But we only had sex three days ago," Gabe protested. "That's not enough time for the test strips to get an accurate reading."

Kim stared at Gabe for a moment. Then he stood and hugged Kim, mentally sending warm emotions to her mind. "Sometimes my brain can get in the way," he admitted.

"I noticed."

"I'm thrilled!" Gabe said with a tighter hug.

"Me too."

"You are going to be a terrific mother."

"Only with your help."

"We should celebrate," Gabe suggested, pulling Kim out of her chair.

"Being with you is all I need."

“That’s nice, but we should do something. How about Friday night, we go to that fancy restaurant? What is it? Blue Ginger something? Or we could go to that expensive day spa near the mall. What’s it called?”

“Anything is fine, as long as it’s with you,” Kim answered. “Hey, you’re still not off the hook. Call your family.”

“After dinner. I promise.”

Gabe kissed Kim, sat, and asked, “When did you know?”

“Since gaining our mental ability, I understand more about my body. On Friday morning, I felt something different. It took me a while to put things together. Now, I’m sure.”

“Do you know the sex?”

“My body tells me it’s a girl.”

“Wow, that’s amazing.”

“You’re not disappointed?” Kim asked.

“What do you mean?”

“In your last marriage, you had daughters. Don’t you want a son?”

“Daughters are great. I should know.”

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After dinner, Gabe called his mother. “Hi, Mom-O.”

“All these years, and I’m Mom-O, not Mother?”

“An old habit,” Gabe admitted. “Hey, there is something important I have to tell you.”

“You married Kim?”

“What?”

“A mother knows these things. Is she pregnant?”

“Um, yes. I found out a few minutes ago.”

“And you did not see fit to invite me to the wedding?”

“We got married in Alaska by the same judge who sentenced me,” Gabe solemnly answered.

“Interesting choice,” Mrs. Alexander commented.

“It seemed fitting.”

“When can I see the new couple?”

“Any time you like.”

“Does Bridget know?”

“I’m calling her next,” Gabe quickly answered.

“Good. I’m happy for the two of you. Kim is an incredible woman who made a better man out of you. Do right by her.”

“I will.”

“I mean it!” Mrs. Alexander demanded.

“I know,” Gabe said, and winced.

“I have something in the oven.”

“You always use that excuse. When was the last time you even turned that thing on? We have a lot more to talk about.”

“Call your sister.”

“Will do. Love you, Mom-O.”

“Love you right back,” Mrs. Alexander said, then hung up.

Kim had been listening to the one-sided conversation and commented, “Your mom hates talking to you on the phone.”

“I know. She talks to my sister for hours. But get her in person, and she’ll talk your ear off.”

“Why?” Kim wanted to know as she twisted strands of her long black hair.

“I never figured that out.”

“Better call your sister.”

Gabe nodded at Kim, then dialed and got a busy signal. “Bridget doesn’t have voicemail?” Kim asked.

“She doesn’t even have a cell phone,” Gabe answered with a groan. “Her husband’s anti-technology.”

“Ooo. It must be fun when you two talk,” Kim said with a laugh.

“It’s a riot!”

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The two finished their chores and were getting ready for bed when Gabe’s phone rang. A voice with a strong Texas accent yelled, “You jerk! You married Kim, and she’s prego?”

“You talked to Mom?” Gabe asked his sister, Bridget.

“For the last two hours. That woman doesn’t know the meaning of silence.”

“She never talks to me like that.”

“What’s with that? ‘I have something in the oven.’ It’s always the same excuse.”

“I never figured that out. Hey, I am guessing Mom brought you up to speed?”

“No wedding invite for your sis?”

“It kind of worked out that way,” Gabe admitted while feeling guilty.

“Well, you two are inseparable. So, it stands to reason you two would go off and get hitched. When’s she due?”

“The traditional nine months.”

“Sex?”

“Girl.”

“Great. Hey, wait. How do you know the sex already? You need an ultrasound for that. Trust me, I’ve had enough of them.”

“Kim knows, and that is all there is to it.”

“That girl is as smart as they come.”

“No arguments here,” Gabe said with pride.

“Hey, I got that picture you all sent. What’s the deal? You look like you are twenty-something. What’s Kim feeding you, and how can I get some?”

After their Alaskan adventure, Gabe appeared younger. However, due to their arrangement with the mysterious Jason, he agreed not to discuss the topic and pleasantly replied, “Healthy living.”

“You’re up to something. I can always tell. Now, spill it! What’s your secret?”

“Good food,” Gabe answered in a cagey voice.

“Tell me, or I will wrestle you to the ground like when we were kids!”

“Remember the Patersons’ car? Please drop this.”

At age fourteen, Bridget and her boyfriend stole their neighbor’s car. They got into a wild police chase and crashed the car into the local gymnasium. The police searched the surrounding area but were unable to locate the car thieves. When Bridget returned late that night, Gabe told her he had watched the theft from his bedroom window. She begged him not to turn her in. Gabe loved Bridget and agreed on one condition. She would never commit another crime. This arrangement lasted for a month, when the police caught her shoplifting. However, Gabe had made a promise and kept her secret.

“Bringing out the big guns?” Bridget asked with a sigh. “You never told me what you two did in Alaska. This is the same topic. Right? Alright, I get it. Mum’s the word.”

“Thanks,” Gabe said with relief.

“In all these years, you have never peeped about what you saw that night. So, this thing must be super hush-hush.”

“It’s important.”

“Well, alright. Next time we talk, I am getting you drunk, and then you will spill your guts like when I made you try vodka. Remember that?”

“Actually, I no longer drink,” Gabe admitted.

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“That girl is improving you big-time,” Bridget observed with pride.

“True.”

“Bro!”

“What?”

“You know, Kim is the best thing that ever happened to you.”

“I used to be married to a wonderful woman, and we had two amazing daughters.”

“Lydia’s eggs were drying up like the Sahara Desert, and she knew it. So, she dug her hooks into the first nice man who looked her way. Kim’s a different breed. She respects you.”

“I know.”

“Do everything she says. No matter what!” Bridget demanded.

“I will.”

“Well, as soon as little Brian is old enough, we’ll fly out and see you-all.”

“Looking forward to it.”

“I am happy as heck for you three,” Bridget said with glee.

“Thanks.”

“Hugs and kisses.”

“Love ya, sis.”

After he hung up, Kim said, “You don’t spend enough phone time with your family. You need to work on that.”

“True.”

“Did she say when she wanted to come by?”

“I’m thinking August. When you’re finished with school.”

“Sounds good. Goodnight, hubby.”

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Twenty-two-year-old Kim is a striking blend of her diverse heritage from Tanzania, Spain, Jamaica, and Cuba. Standing five foot eight, she possessed an athletic build with long, shapely legs, an ample bust, and a trim waistline. Kim’s straight, jet-black hair complemented her golden-bronze skin, thin nose, pucker lips, picturesque brown eyes, and high cheekbones. Her trademark confident expression

conveyed both charm and self-assurance. Kim's expert application of makeup always struck the perfect balance between sophistication and allure.

After interacting with the white box gifted to them by the alien race known as the Veronn, Kim and Gabe learned how to mentally communicate words and emotions with each other from over ten feet away. It also provided them with the tools to better understand the human mind.

It was now possible to interpret some emotions in other people's minds. On rare occasions, Kim could telepathically understand (without the white box) a word or two. She had utilized this ability to assist her accountant, Boyd, with his marital and inner-office communication challenges.

Unfortunately, the more Kim meddled, the more uncomfortable he became. This intrusion came to a head one morning when she confronted Boyd about his "mentally undressing" a coworker. Boyd felt humiliated, and he resigned. This was an incredible blow to Kim and the company.

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Thirty-nine-year-old Gabe was a man of quiet strength. Standing six foot two, his thick, chestnut-brown hair added a touch of rugged charm, tousled just enough to give him a casual yet polished look. Gabe could trace his lineage to England and Hungary, but grew up in Killeen, Texas.

Gabe's chiseled jaw and strong profile complemented his broad shoulders. Recently, he gained a newfound level of muscle definition through dedicated yoga and regular workouts at their home gym. Gabe's updated hairstyle further stressed this change—a short pompadour suggested by Kim. The subtle alteration reflected his willingness to embrace his wife's expert fashion sense.

Like Kim, Gabe's new mental ability was also an issue with KimSemi employees. He knew he should ignore his telepathic insights, but this inside knowledge confused him, and ignoring nonverbal facts was often impossible. This insight led to illogical or inappropriate questions and awkward situations. As a result, Gabe's coworkers kept him at a distance.

Unfortunately, their new ability hindered their relationship despite Kim's best efforts to discuss problems. The most hurtful incident occurred when she revealed her family's cancer history. Gabe thought with no consideration, <Cool. I can start dating again.>

Kim felt justifiably hurt, and Gabe profusely apologized for his inappropriate thought. She understood this thought was random and did not represent his true feelings. However, Kim often recalled the incident, and when Gabe experienced her pain, it saddened him.

The incident inspired a new rule. To mitigate future unwanted mental intrusions, Gabe suggested they use a flat hand gesture to indicate “Get out of my thoughts” and a thumbs-up for “Let’s swim.” (Swimming was their term for mental communication.) This simple solution improved their relationship, but misunderstandings still occurred.