

"Hey, kiddo. I picked you up a pizza and left it on the counter in the kitchen," said Mr. Worthy to his daughter as he put a shirt on his only son, Mikey. The boy was lying on his new Tiny Tots Starter Bed. "Put whatever you're not gonna finish in the fridge and we can eat it tomorrow. Save Julia some of the pepperoni slices, too."

"I'm eighteen now, dad. Don't you think I'm too old to be 'kiddo' still?" asked Lilly.

"Look, as long as I'm around buying you pizza, you're gonna be kiddo. Capisce?"

"I see talking with Julia didn't go well," said Lilly.

"No, not exactly. I get why she's mad, Lil. I do. Fifteen-year-old girls are complex. But I just feel like it's time. I'm glad you understand that — you get that from your mother."

Lilly picked up Mikey and as she did, a bittersweet smile pressed up on her face like a moth outside a bedroom window.

"Now, you be a big boy while your sister watches you tonight, okay, champ?" she said.

"Yes. Lilly's in charge," said Mikey, hanging onto his sister like a baby chimp.

Suddenly the pounding of Julia coming down the stairs could be heard from across the house.

"Dad, I'm leaving," she said from outside the nursery. "Nina's dad will drive me home in the morning. Bye."

"She won't even come in to say goodbye to me in person," said Mr. Worthy, looking out the door. "I should probably get going too. If you need anything, call me. I'll be home by one at the latest." He started walking to the door before saying, "And seriously, Lil, thanks for everything."

"Yeah, no problem dad."

There they went. Lilly's father and sister joined the Friday night parade of cars passing by outside the house.

"Alright Mikey, it's just you and me tonight. What do you want to do? Play with trucks? Watch Farm Festival?"

Mikey pointed to the transparent box with the white lid sitting on the bottom shelf of his dresser and said, "Let's color!"

Lilly grabbed the box, several sheets of printer paper from her dad's office, and took everything to the kitchen where she set them down on the five-person table. The box of crayons smelled nostalgic to her. Without looking at the colors he was grabbing, Mikey picked up a handful of crayons and set them by his paper. Lilly was particular when it came to choosing. By the time she began to actually draw anything, Mikey was already halfway done with his picture. The sound of his crayons quickly dragging back and forth across the piece of paper echoed in Lilly's head.

"Look, Lilly. There you are. I made you red 'cause that's your favorite color," said Mikey, handing her his drawing. "I made everybody their own color. Julia is green, and daddy is blue. I'm yellow."

The four of them looked so happy in Mikey's picture.

"What did you draw?" he asked.

"It's not done, or good," said Lilly, showing Mikey her drawing. "It's a sunrise, see. This is what tomorrow will look like. Or at least, what I hope it looks like."

The way Lilly made the hues of yellow and red dance through the sun and burst through the deep blue sky would have impressed anybody.

"It's pretty," Mikey said. "Can I have it in my room?"

"You want it? It's all yours. I'll hang your picture up on the fridge so daddy can see it when he gets home. I think it's time I go put the movie on, huh?"

In Mikey's room, the television screen flashed blue as Lilly hit play from the child-sized bed. The theme song to Farm Festival started. Mikey's face lit up as it always did during the song.

"Sing it with me, Lil," he said.

"All the animals on the farm played and danced in their barn. The farmer came to see what he heard, but when he walked there wasn't a word. Mother hen hushed all beaks making sure no chicks peeped."

Mikey cuddled up next to his stuffed gorilla. Lilly remembered when Mikey's blue-walled room used to be her white-walled room, and her mom would lie beside her and watch movies till she fell asleep. Soon enough, Mikey was turning in his sleep. This is what Lilly had been waiting for all night.

Cutting through the living room was the quickest route to get to her room. But Lilly stuck to her recent trend of going through the kitchen, avoiding the big clear mirror that hung next to the family pictures. Once Lilly got to her vanilla-perfume-scented room she locked her door, closed her window, and lowered her blinds, diminishing the light from the lamppost outside.

An empty box of tissues sat on her desk next to her laptop. Lilly put the box in her trashcan and smushed down the garbage. The force of it mashed a pretzel bag that held a used pregnancy test. She pulled out her makeup kit and hair straightener, turned towards her small foggy mirror, and began making herself beautiful. Her lips were plump and red, like two strawberries; her mascara made her cerulean-blue eyes pop as bright as fireworks; and her blonde hair shone as if electricity was running through it. She did look beautiful, even in her baggy white t-shirt and black pajama shorts.

Lilly opened the laptop on her desk. With an almost convincingly still hand, she turned the camera on. The green light stared at her and she got lost in her image on the screen. Slowly, Lilly clutched the bottom of her shirt and raised it up over her head. She stripped herself of her clothes until she stood unadorned in front of the camera. Different positions and different angles made her feel like a different person. She received dozens of messages asking for different things. The woman of the house put on a show. The cars outside kept driving by.

After uploading what she had done that night, Lilly shut her laptop and put her clothes back on. In the bathroom she washed off her makeup, rinsing hard and fast. Lilly walked back across the house to check on Mikey. The boy slept silently, not waking from the light that was now coming from the hallway.

Lilly knew that she could not promise Mikey that tomorrow would be as beautiful as she hoped it would be. As the door closed, the light on Mikey's face dissipated into the dark. In the kitchen, Lilly grabbed a slice of pepperoni pizza and a glass of wine, which her dad allowed her to drink at family parties. As she slid open the screen door that led to the deck where her family would sit and eat

dinner in the summer, Lilly hoped that no bugs would fly into the house.

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