

## **That Dreaded Day**

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I can't believe the day is here. The week had gone by faster than I could have imagined. My heart had not stopped trembling since the day I was told the dreaded news. My worst fear had come true. Yeah, I remember the day, the day he told us he was leaving; my knees felt weak, my heart felt shattered. Back to battle my husband Marc was going, back overseas to the unknown. It was only one week ago today that he got word and laid this awfulness upon us. Now, he must go – with no guarantee of return.

To outsiders looking in, we have it all. I have the perfect life. I have my handsome husband, two well-behaved sons, and this big ol' house with a staff giving us all the assistance we will ever need. But the outsiders, they don't see the pain. They don't see the devastation that takes over my son's faces every time Marc turns and leaves. It had been two years since he last left; we thought these days were through.

Last Thursday seemed like any other Thursday. I spent my morning like any other morning. I woke up to the birds chirping and the beautiful sunshine. I put on my robe and with the help of our maids, Josephine and Christie, proceeded to get the children ready to attend school. I made sure they dressed properly and brushed their teeth then sent them downstairs to breakfast. I laid out Marc's suit and went downstairs and waited his arrival. The children and I sat down to breakfast and waited for Marc before we began eating.

"Good morning, Father!" the children said in harmony, shortly after he appeared. "Good morning, sons!" he replied with a small simile. Marc had always kept his emotions to a minimum, especially with our sons. I think he wanted to make sure they grew up to become tough men like he was. It didn't mean he didn't love them unconditionally; he just wanted to prepare them for the real world. Chrissy brought in breakfast and we ate our perfectly scrambled eggs, with toast and sweet jelly in silence like always. We always ate in silence; everyone seemed more focused on the food than

the conversation, and that was ok with me. The boys then ran off to catch the school bus, and Marc readied to leave. “Goodbye, Honey,” he said, as he headed out to the car and off to the army base.

After he left, I went back upstairs to ready myself for the day. I planned to meet three other wives for tea that afternoon. Meeting with the wives was always a production. Getting ready took hours – every curl had to be in place and your outfit had to be perfect. It was quite exhausting. If you didn’t look the part, you’d be outcast. When I was finally ready, I headed off to tea, like any other Thursday.

The day was coming to a close. I had returned from tea and awaited the children’s return. “Good day, Mother,” my son said as they both walked in. “Go straight upstairs and begin your homework before dinner,” I replied. I supervised as Chrissy and Josephine prepared dinner, and I awaited Marc’s return.

I heard the car coming down the long cobblestone driveway, and I rushed to the door to greet my husband with joy. “Hi, Honey,” I said with a smile, but that smile was not returned. We walked into the house. The children came down to greet their father, but he quickly sent them back upstairs. “What is it?” I said with haste.

“It’s happening,” he said calmly.

“What’s happening?” I said anxiously.

“They’re sending me back.”

My heart sank and my body froze. It was the four words I had hoped I’d never hear again. I wanted to

speak, but I couldn't get out any words. The tears began to flow vigorously down my face.

"Don't cry, Honey, its gonna be ok."

"But why?" I said, "but why?"

"Things are getting bad over there, I have no choice."

I began to pace abruptly. "But what if something happens?" I screeched. "What if you don't come back?" Marc forced me to sit and placed his arms around me. Rocking me back and forth, he said, "Don't say that. I'm coming back." I couldn't bear to look at his face, because both of us knew there wasn't an ounce of honesty in that statement.

I picked myself up and said, "When do you go?" more calmly.

"One week from today," he uttered softly.

"So soon!" I felt myself beginning to lose composure, again. But Marc jumped in and said, "No more tears. Let's make it a decent week, my love."

In the background, Josephine announced dinner was ready. My knees felt weak, but I rustled up the strength to head to the dining room. When the children came down, Marc told them the news. They remained silent as sadness consumed their innocent faces. We ate dinner in silence, that night.

Yes, I remember that day, the day that changed our lives; and now the week had past.

When I awoke this morning, it seemed the birds were not chirping and the beautiful sunlight did not seem

as shiny and luminous to me. It seemed the house was still and silent. Marc had already gone out back to ready his weaponry for his departure.

I did not know how I was going to remain composed, but I had to for the sake of our sons. Yes, I have all the help in the world but without Marc our family is empty. The fear and worry will not leave me until his safe return. Each day will be filled with uncertainty and despair about my husband's life.

On the outside, I have it all. On the inside, I am breaking.

I could hear that a few of our close companions and neighbors had gathered outside the house to see him off. I watched Marc prepare his belongings, and my body became tense. The sadness on my sons' faces as they watched him made me want to break down. But I held it in. Can't let anyone see you fall. Then the horn sounded as the car came down the long driveway. It was time.

"Ready?" Marc said. I wasn't, but I gave a half-witted smile and proceeded to walk. He held my arm and for one last second, I felt safe. We walked out the door at a slow pace, our sons following. Those gathered outside patted Marc on the shoulder as they cleared the way for us to walk through. I could see their lips moving, but I couldn't hear any words. I was numb. I noticed they were all smiling. I knew it was fake, just like mine. Underneath those smiles were feelings of sorrow. Everyone was thinking about tragedy – what if

something bad happened? I knew they were thinking it, because I was thinking it. But I wouldn't let it show. The walk seemed long and treacherous. When we finally reached the car, Marc patted our sons on their backs and said "Good-bye, sons." They smiled. He looked me in the eye and said "I'll be back, Dear." I leaned over and kissed his cheek, keeping my smile up. He got in the car and the car proceeded down the long driveway, as we all watched in silence. I stood there for a while, while the others had begun to disperse, processing his last words. Truth is, I'll never know for sure if he is really coming back. I hate to think the worst, but I must always be prepared. Deep down, I felt so scared, that could have been the last time I ever see him. I wanted to cry, but I didn't.

I turned to my sons, who were sitting off to the side in silence. "Let's go inside, boys." We walked back into our big ol' house, shut the door, and continued with the day.