

Beautiful Boy

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Please note, this work includes content related to themes of psychological distress.

“The monster’s gone, he’s on the run and your Daddy’s here...”

Collin sang low and sweetly as he cradled his son in his arms.

“Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful boy...”

He watched his little boy being lulled to sleep, his eyelids rolling open and closed, revealing his faded blue irises. Collin prided himself on creating such a good kid. He never cried, whined, or fussed. He had no problems sleeping – he could sleep pretty much all day and night. It was him and his perfect, beautiful boy – just them – in their two bedroom apartment in Mesa, Arizona.

It was a particularly hot day and their AC had been beat for the past week, but maintenance was always slow and it would be at least another day until they would come in to replace it. About an hour after Collin had gotten his son down for his afternoon nap, he was in the kitchen eating a light lunch when he noticed a musty stench coming from his boy’s room. That was the one thing with his son: he reeked, especially when it was hot in the apartment. Collin had tried all the best gentle bath products on his boy, but the smell would always linger.

“Did somebody poopoo?” Collin humorously asked as he entered his baby’s room.

“Wow kid, I must admit I am impressed by your ability to really make this whole apartment smell like shit,” he chuckled and undressed his boy. But

there wasn’t a trace of anything in his diaper– it was completely clean.

“Odd,” said Collin to himself, “do you need another bath perhaps?”

He looked up how many baths you can give a baby in a day. No more than 3x a week until your baby is more mobile, read the computer. But the smell was too unbearable, and he thought it best that he give his son a gentle cleaning.

Bathtime was a ritual for them. He made sure the water was the perfect temperature: mildly warm to the touch, but not too cold. He took out the body wash his wife had gotten when their boy was first born, and applied it to a damp towelette. On the speaker he played John Lennon’s “Beautiful Boy” softly. Since his son was born, there was not a song he loved more. Carefully, he picked up his baby from the crib and placed him into the little bathtub, singing to him:

“Out on the ocean,
sailing away,

I can hardly wait

To see you come of age

But I guess we’ll both just have to be patient

‘Cause it’s a long way to go...”

“There you go, my boy,” said Collin as he gently caressed his baby’s skin with the towel.

“You’re sleepy, aren’t you?” he said, smiling, his

precious eyes closed as the slow-moving bathwater blanketed his little body.

“My perfect, perfect boy.”

Everything about his son Collin adored. The little dimples on his puffy, purple cheeks. The way his hair was nothing but a light coat of peach fuzz on his squishy little scalp. The pudgy, so much of it, from his chubby toes to his bloated round belly to his puffy hands and fingers. And those little black fingernails. So tiny they almost felt unreal. His head was comically large, just as Collin’s was as a baby too. He had his father’s nose, round and wide, and his wife’s hazy blue eyes. His skin was delicious; soft and damp and cold and tender. Collin hadn’t a doubt in his mind that this boy was perfection. It was as if life before the birth of his son was so insignificant it simply ceased to exist – all that was before felt like a hazy dream. And every time Collin would hold his little boy, he cared for nothing and nobody else in the world. There was no greater love, no deeper affection than the love and affection that Collin had for his baby. And there was nothing in the entire world Collin wouldn’t do for him.

Bathtime had ended hours ago. Collin tried to feed him earlier but he wasn’t hungry and was quite stubborn about not eating, so he put him to bed early, swaddled in his favorite fuzzy blue blanket. Turning the lights down low and making sure the baby monitor was on, just in case, he left his boy’s room and approached the home phone. He had neglected answering any phone calls recently and had some voicemails to listen to.

“You have three new messages:”

“Hi, it’s Steven here, hope you’ve been umm.. holding up. *his throat clears* I just uh wanted to let you know we completely understand if you need more time off, just please give us a call back umm.. to let us know what your plan is moving forward.”

Deleted.

“Collin, it’s me. You know, your fucking wife? I’ve been trying to get ahold of you for days now. Answer your fucking phone. I’m still staying at Marriane’s if you care... *she pauses* ...we were supposed to support each other through this, Collin. *her voice shaking* I need you here. Do you understand how hard this is for me, especially without you?”

Deleted.

“Hi sweetheart, it’s your mother calling. Me and dad have been very worried about you, dear. What happened? Please give us a call back. I spoke to Annie. She says you haven’t been answering your phone? Honey, please talk to me. We’re here for you, the whole family is. Although your father and I have never dealt with anything like this, we’ve dealt with loss. I want you to call me ba-”

Deleted.

His skin burning hot, face flushed, he returned into his baby’s room and swiftly picked his boy up, rocking his limp body slowly.

“Shhhh, my beautiful, perfect angel, don’t you cry...” Collin whispered delicately in the darkness of the room, hot tears swelling in his eyes,

“Dad loves you more than life.”