

Excerpt from: Temporary Doctor, Surprise Father by Lynne Marshall

PROLOGUE:

“Will you wait for me?” Beck Braxton wove his fingers through January Stewart’s long platinum hair to frame her face. Standing in the driveway of her house, she avoided his eyes. “Will you?”

She gave a reluctant nod.

“I love you. You know that,” he said, wishing they were somewhere much more private.

Tears brimmed and gathered on her thick lashes. “Then why are you leaving?” Her voice quivered.

He bit his lip to push back his brewing frustration. “We’ve gone over this a thousand times, January. I’ve got to get out of here. When I come back things will be different. I promise.”

She blinked and tears zigzagged down her cheeks. The light from the streetlamp made them glow.

“Tell me you love me.” He was leaving for army bootcamp early next morning, and though she’d said it a hundred times before, he needed to hear it again. Now.

“You know I love you,” she mumbled, fisting his shirt and pulling on it in a desperate gesture.

This wasn’t at all like the gorgeous and confident girl he knew.

She pulled him near and he kissed her, tears mixing with their kiss. Salt and sadness tainted their goodbye. He hated this. He didn’t want to leave her any more than she wanted him to leave, but it was time to get out on his own. He was only eighteen. If he wanted to be a man and marry the woman he loved, he’d have to suck it up and follow the only path he knew.

He’d dreamed of joining the army since the age of twelve, anything to get away from his father and a dead end future in Atwater. As he’d grown older, he’d fantasized about adventure and seeing the world. He’d started hanging out at the army recruiter’s office when he’d first gotten his driver’s license at sixteen. They knew him by name and had fed his dreams with their own stories of military service. He’d signed up as soon as he could, knowing he’d have to wait until he was eighteen and after he graduated from high school before he could officially join.

Then he’d met January last year, and had fallen in love for the first time in his life. Fallen. In. Love. Big time.

He’d walked across the auditorium stage last night and accepted his high-school diploma. She’d been in the audience, being a year behind. Leaving was the hardest thing he’d ever had to do, but he hoped she’d understand and everything would work out. He’d come back as soon as he could to marry her and take her with him, wherever he was stationed. But he couldn’t tell her that just yet, not until he’d worked everything out.

“Promise you’ll wait for me,” he whispered over her lips.

“I...”

“January!” her mother’s shrill voice called from the porch.

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