

Dear John

Karen had been at home with the boys all day. She was exhausted. She thought William had picked up a cold at nursery. Yesterday the baby had started with the same symptoms. John had slept through both boys crying. They seemed to play a tag team, as soon as she got one off to sleep the other one woke up.

John's alarm rang at 6.30am, he had his shower, made tea and toast, left the dishes in the sink and went off to work. Karen lay in bed, she could feel her anger rising, John had not checked on the boys before he left, he'd not even given her a goodbye kiss. He'd escaped to work and she had to deal with everything; washing, cleaning cooking, with little sleep and two sick sons.

John's dirty clothes lay on the bedroom floor. Why could he never put things in the linen basket? Sighing, she picked up the laundry. Karen caught sight of herself in the mirror, hair standing on end and dark circles below her eyes. She needed a shower. Turning on the tap, she heard Thomas, the baby start crying. Too late, the day had started.

Thomas was standing in the cot, his face bright red, maybe he was teething after all? William toddled into the bedroom, still half sleep, sucking his thumb.

"Hello my little soldier, how are you feeling today?"

Karen gave him a hug before picking Thomas up. No point rushing to get them washed and dressed, it was another stay-at home day, third in a row. Karen made breakfast with the baby on her hip, whilst William played with his cars on the mat, his head bent in concentration. Karen saw a red patch on the back of his neck,

"William, come to Mummy"

He was covered in red spots, Karen was certain it was chicken pox. She muddled through the rest of the day, spots gradually appearing on Thomas too. Putting both boys in the bath, she heard John's key turn in the lock. He plodded up the stairs. Karen stood on the landing and burst into tears,

"I need to go out and get some Kalpol and Calamine lotion, the boys have chicken pox."

John started to say he'd go instead.

"John, I just need to get out of the house for half an hour."

As Karen opened the front door she realised she hadn't even brushed her hair, she shut the door again and went into the cloakroom. She then heard John at the top of the stairs,

"Hello Patsy, sorry love, I'll have to be quick. Both the boys are sick, she's just gone to the chemist. We'll have to postpone tomorrow night. No she can't cope with everything, she was crying when I came in. I'll make it up to you when I have to 'work late' again." he laughed.

Karen gripped the sides of the basin until her knuckles went white. Patsy her best friend since school, a double betrayal.

500 words

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