

The Last Kiss

had nothing else. Childhood had slipped away and in its place, the harsh reality of the world had taken hold. The darkness of the night was a constant reminder of the pain that had been inflicted. My mother's kisses were no longer the same. They were now tinged with a sadness that I could not ignore. A goodnight kiss from my mother meant a goodbye to the woman I loved. Her cheek was smooth and soft, but the experience was anything but comforting. The goodnight kiss was a reminder of the love that had once been so precious. The smell of my mother's skin, along with the faintest remnant of her perfume, was a bittersweet reminder of the life I had lost.



I went to find my father. He was working down in the basement. I approached him, but he didn't look up. I watched him for a while, trying to find the man I once knew. Several minutes passed. "Going to bed, Dad," I said. "Well good night then," he said, his voice a mix of half-smile and half-sigh. I was stunned. There was something in his voice that I had never heard before. I went to bed. Outside, the sound of the summer neighborhood was still playing. Next night I decided to try my father again. I approached him noisily. He stood up and turned to me. He squeezed my shoulder. "Good night then," he said, turning away. I was eight years old. I thought the world was too big for me. I was too old to be kissed by my father. The next morning, I found my father's messages in even messier handwriting, not