

## **PROMISES TO KEEP**

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### EXCERPTS

#### Eric

He walked to where she stood and kissed her cheek before embracing his wife and son in a group hug. “I feel damn lucky this emergency didn’t come up sooner.”

He brushed her arm, noting the goosebumps prickling against his palm.

“If that call had come before Benjamin’s birth, would you have left and missed seeing your son be born?” she asked.

How could he answer without adding more lies to the growing mountain of falsehoods he’d already fabricated? As far as she knew, he was committed to his profession as an importer for his parents’ chain of discount stores. The success of his mission—and possibly his safety—depended on her believing that version.

“Of course not.” Eric told her what she wanted to hear.

Smoke screens and twisting reality to suit his immediate goal had served him well, not just in his professional life, but in his married life, too. Sadly, he’d become pretty good at spinning the truth to where his story held little or no facts.

#### Kate

Kate smiled at the way Eric’s eyebrows arched in his hopeless attempts to get Benjamin’s attention. For the past twenty minutes, she held their son in an awkward posture in front of her desktop computer camera, coaxing a somewhat sleeping baby to greet his father. Up until a few seconds ago, their son displayed little interest. She knew the squirming had more to do with hunger than his eagerness to interact with his dad.

Kate had waited all day for Eric to call. She needed to see his face, stubbled with a five-o'clock shadow, even if it was through her computer screen. She shifted Benjamin to her other arm. *This must be how military families with one parent deployed feel.*

This wasn't the marriage she signed up for. Twenty minutes over a video call couldn't substitute for his presence. It could be exhaustion or not getting regular sleep, but she wondered if the man she married was more like her father in ways she hadn't anticipated. Eric wasn't an alcoholic, a wifebeater or a deadbeat. But neither was Monica's husband, Brad. Kate had witnessed how her brother-in-law's sins nearly ripped the soul of their family apart.

There were all sorts of ways to abandon your wife and desert your family. Just because she was most familiar with the ones her father implemented, didn't mean that she and her sisters wouldn't suffer from other approaches. Separated by hundreds of miles without knowing when he would return qualified as desertion of a type. At least in Kate's mind.

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