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About 1000 Words

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## So Perfect

By: Michelle Moskiewicz

"No, Daddy. It's alright. I was just stressed out last night, and then we started arguing. I guess I got myself worked up over nothing," Laura said into the phone propped between her ear and shoulder. She swept crumbs from the kids' breakfast off of the counter into her open hand as she glanced into the living room where the two boys had been watching cartoons. "Really, I just overreacted."

A small, blonde-haired toddler in a walker glided around the corner into the kitchen where she stood. He peered up at her with a grin that showed his three teeth and reached his chubby arms up, "Mamaaa!"

"Look, I've got to start getting lunch ready, and Caleb wants held. Can I call you in the morning or text you when they get to bed?"

"Mommy! Look! Big, big!"

"Love you!" she said, before she pressed the end call button. Laura sighed, picked up Caleb from the walker, and trudged into the living room where she was met with a huge mess and her three-year-old who sat in the middle of a pile of couch cushions.

"I made a tower!" he giggled from the top of the cushions. Surrounding the so-called tower was what felt like a million pieces of cereal she'd given him as a snack before she called her dad.

“Chase. I just swept. Why would you do this?” Laura could feel the tears of frustration welling up behind her eyes. There was no point in asking the question. She knew the answer. He did it because he wanted to. Because, he was three and was still learning about the consequences of his actions, without realizing how it affected others. She kneeled down, sat Caleb beside her, and looked around the room.

She still needed to fold the laundry, make the beds, start the dishwasher, and now sweep again before mopping.

“Can we play dinosaurs now?” Chase asked with his hand on her shoulder, looking to the toy box that held his most prized possessions. He had hope in his eyes, and though she didn’t have time, she didn’t want to disappoint him again by saying no.

"If you can help me clean this mess up, we can play dinosaurs," she said. Chase squealed with delight before he bounded across the room and started to pick up cereal. Laura stood. She had intended to sweep up the cereal but noticed that Chase was picking up the pieces individually, counting them. Maybe she could make it a counting game. They hadn’t done anything educational for a few days. Just another tic mark in the books under “Mom-Fail.”

Forty-five minutes later, they had cleaned up the cereal and played with dinosaurs, but the chores loomed over her shoulder like a villain waiting to pounce. For the first time that week, the two boys quietly played together on the rug with some building blocks. Laura started to the laundry room when she heard the distinct buzzing of her phone going off with a phone call. It was Trevor.

“Hey! How’s work?” she asked, pushing a piece of hair behind her ear and heading into the laundry room.

"Why weren't you answering my texts?" He sounded annoyed.

"Sorry. Chase made a mess, and I set my phone down to clean it up. Then he wanted to play with the dinosaurs."

"That's weird. Whenever I'm home, you always have your phone glued to you." He was definitely annoyed.

"I'm sorry, I just set it down to take care of stuff here. What's up?" she asked with hesitation. There had to be a reason Trevor called. She folded the shirt in her hands and grabbed another as she waited for his answer.

"Just wanted to see what you were doing, since you couldn't answer my texts. Did you even take the hamburger out for tonight? Or were you too busy playing dinosaurs?"

"I was going to take it out when I started lunch for the boys. It's only noon," Laura said. She shoved another load of laundry from the washer into the dryer and tossed Chase's sheets into the machine. The phone clicked. "Hello?"

Looking down, she saw that Trevor had ended the call. She thumbed her way into her text messages and saw that there were six from him.

*Trevor: Hey, I'm sorry about last night. You're right. I shouldn't take the stress from work out on you. You've got enough to deal with at home without me adding to it because I'm upset.*

*I know you work your butt off all day to make sure everything is okay.*

*You're still upset. I get it, but if I can't talk to you about work, then I don't want to hear about how sitting at home all day is so hard.*

*So you're going to fuck around on your phone, but won't take three seconds to message me back?*

*I swear to God if I come home and the house is trashed, I'm going to lose my mind.  
You're so lazy.*

*I don't know why I ever married you.*

Laura sank to the floor. It was going to be another bad night. He was going to come home angry and screaming at everyone. He would end up throwing and breaking things just like last night. Caleb started to whimper. He was bored, or hungry, or wanted to be held again. She looked around the house. There was still so much to do. Everything had to be perfect. So perfect.

"Mommy! I missed the toilet again!" Chase yelled from the bathroom. Her phone buzzed next to her leg like a warning.

*Trevor: You just really love ruining my day, don't you?*

She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. She didn't have time to feel sorry for herself. Laura looked across the laundry room where the overnight bag sat and picked up her phone. No time to feel sorry for herself.

"Hey, Daddy. I know I said I'd call later, but you come pick the boys and I up? Now?"

End