Thanksgiving

When Kate arrived home from her unbelievable summer adventure with Julie, she was greeted by her dogs. Her house sitter had fed all the animals that morning before leaving, but it was 7pm so her first order of business was to feed everyone again.
As she went thru the familiar routine, she began to relax. It was a dream vacation, one that she would never forget. She touched her stomach, where Nick's child was growing, knowing there was no way she could ever forget. She knew she could do it, raise a baby. Oh, it'd be hard, she had no doubt about that, but she was strong. She'd just have to cowgirl up and deal with it. A baby would change her live but she had to look at it like it would be another great adventure.

Nick was true to his word, in the beginning. He text her several times a day and called when their schedules coordinated. But the time seemed to slip by and Nick's month of promoting his new album turned into two, then three.

Kate had decided to take a job in Omaha with her company, transferring to be closer to Julie. Since Kate's mom had recently retired and spent her winters in Arizona, Kate decided to move closer to Julie to have some help and support. Her mom would visit her in Omaha just as she did in Washington.

Julie had found her the perfect house. It was a three bedroom, three bath tri-level with a finished basement. As you walked in the house there was a set of stairs leading up to the 2nd level. There were two regular bedrooms and the master plus an addition full bath. On the entry level to the left of the stairs was a living room, to the right the dining room.
Through the dining room was the kitchen. It connected to the back of the living room. The back of the living room opened out onto a large wooden deck that overlooked the pasture.
The finished basement contained an additional bedroom and bathroom. The den was converted to the movie room with a big screen tv.

Kate was exhausted after the move. It took five days to drive to Omaha with the horses. Then she had to unpack and get settled.
By the time she was getting the hang of her schedule and feeling at home, it was Thanksgiving.

Julie had invited her over to her home to eat dinner with the family. Kate didn't think much of it while she prepared her grandma's apple salad to take over.
Nick and Aaron were going to have Thanksgiving at their mom's house. She was trying very hard to repair the rift in her family and Kate insisted that Nick go, even though her heart ached to see him again.

She rang the doorbell at Julie's house, with her knee, because her hands were full of food. She wasn't prepared for AJ to answer the door.

"Katy!" He smiled, reaching for the food she was carrying.
"Come in, come in."

Kate's heart was in her stomach. This was it. Her charade was over. AJ would call Nick and that'd be it. He'd never call her again.

AJ had taken the veggie tray from her and led the way in the house. Kate tugged at her shirt, trying lower the hem a little more. She was only 4 months along but she was definitely showing. She had found some cute maternity clothes that didn't look like maternity clothes but there was no way she was going to hide this from AJ. Besides, Julie's family all knew she was expecting and they'd ask how she was doing.
She gritted her teeth and followed him into the kitchen. Julie was at the sink, washing the potatoes she was about to put in a pot of boiling water.

"So where's Nick?" AJ asked without turning to look back at Kate.
"He and Aaron went to see their mom."
"Why didn't you go?" he asked, confused.
"They need some family time to build their relationships back up. I didn't want to get in the way."

Kate had strategically place herself between the island and AJ to hide her belly but it was a total waste of time. When Julie's dad walked in and saw her the cat was out of the bag.
"Hey Prego, how ya feeling?"

AJ looked confused until he saw Kate hug Julie's dad. He saw her baby bump and couldn't believe Julie had never mentioned it. Now the question was whose baby was it.

Julie's dad led Kate away from the kitchen, asking her if she could adjust his new reading glasses, leaving Julie and AJ alone in the kitchen.

Julie didn't know what to say. She knew she had been keeping this secret from him but it wasn't her secret to tell. But she had decided to not let Kate's secret keep her from Alex so she had invited them both for Thanksgiving. She knew this moment would come and no amount of preparing for it would make it any easier. Julie took a deep breath. Not wanting to face him yet, she took more time than was necessary to put the potatoes in the pot.

"So why didn't you tell me about Kate?" he asked, the hurt registering in his voice.
"She made me promise not to," she replied without turning to meet his gaze that she could feel.
"So ... Does Nick know?"
"No."
He hated to ask the next question but it was unavoidable.
"Is it his?"
Fire flashed in Julie's eyes as her head snapped around to face him.
"Of course it's his!"
"I'm sorry, babe," he said honestly. "But why hasn't she told him?"
"Because he never came back," Julie said quietly, wiping her wet hands on the hand towel that

rested on her shoulder.
"What do you mean he never came back? He was supposed to come right after the tour ended."
"Yeah, well he didn't. His promoter keeps booking him back to back appearance. Or so he says."
Julie took a step towards him, looking up into Alex's dark brown eyes.
"I think she's given up on ever seeing him again."

Alex pulled out his phone but Julie closed the remaining distance between them and covered the phone with her hand.
"You can't tell him," Julie said angrily.
"What do you mean I can't tell him? He deserves to know."
"No, he doesn't. Kate told me a million times, when I would say the same thing, that he's made his choice."
"Babe, it may not be his choice. When we're on tour, we're at the mercy of the promoters and upper management. You have to at least give him a chance to know his own kid."

Julie shook her head. She couldn't imagine what her world would be like if Alex hadn't come back. She knew how Kate was dealing with all this. Kate lived one day at a time. She tried not to borrow trouble. Julie hadn't noticed she had begun crying until Alex reached out and gently took one tear from her cheek before his arms encircled her.

"Tell you what, why don't I text Nick and tell him I'm here and he should fly out for a couple of days. We won't tell Kate, in case he doesn't come."
Julie just nodded into his shoulder.

Just before they sat for dinner, Alex made an effort to catch Kate. Julie had asked him to get a gallon of milk from the extra fridge in the garage and he saw that as the perfect opportunity to talk to Kate alone.
"Kate, can I talk to you a minute," he asked.
Kate followed him out to the garage. It was a chilly fall day but Kate was constantly overheated with her hormones and body changing.

"I'm sorry I was surprised when I saw you were expecting. Julie didn't tell me."
Kate couldn't keep eye contact. She could feel her eyes stinging with tears.
"Please, don't tell Nick," she whispered.
"I won't," he said, pulling her into his protective embrace.
"But I want you to know that if you need anything I'll be here for you, ok?"
Kate nodded. He pulled her back to look into her eyes but her gaze was on her feet. He gently lifted her chin with two fingers, bringing their eyes to the same level.
"I just have one request."
Kate finally looked into his eyes, but was confused.
"Can this kid call me Uncle Alex?"
Kate laughed.
He hugged her again and told her to go back in to warm up.
"Warm up? I'm my own personal sauna as it is. I'm thinking a dip in the pool is sounding pretty

good right now." She laughed as she headed inside.

Still in the garage, Alex pulled out his phone and sent a text to Nick while he had a moment alone.

ALEX: Happy Turkey Day!
NICK: Back at cha!
ALEX: How's Kate?
NICK: Good. She moved close to Julie. We may need to plan a trip to see them after the holiday.
ALEX: You got any plans this weekend?
NICK: At Mom's for a couple of days.
ALEX: Why don't we fly out and surprise the girls Sunday?
NICK: I have to make sure my promoter didn't book anything.
ALEX: You still want to see her don't you?
NICK: Of course.
ALEX: Julie said you haven't been to see her since July.
NICK: I know. Every time I plan to go something comes up.
ALEX: Well cancel it! Sounds like Kate's going thru some stuff and she could use some support.
NICK: What? She didn't say anything.
ALEX: Julie wouldn't say, just that she needs a lot of support right now. I'll meet you at the airport Sunday.
NICK: I'll do my best.
ALEX: I'm serious Nick! Get your ass to Omaha. Sunday
NICK: Alright. Alright. I'll be there but if it was serious Kate would have told me.