

Title: From Here to Paternity – 4 (Life Goes On)

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Rating: PG

Synopsis: Fourth story in the From Here to Paternity series. The series is a sequel based on my story, Great Expectations. You don't need to read Great Expectations to follow FHTP, and each story in this series stands on its own.

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Author's Notes: Thanks to eman and Kim for all their hard work on keeping me on the straight and narrow.

Feedback: Do you really even have to ask? OF COURSE!!!!

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Lee pushed the bedroom door open and entered the dimly lit room. Glancing over to the bed, he saw his wife. She was on her side, her back to him, asleep. The reading light on the nightstand was glowing, and it looked as if she'd drifted off right in the middle of her book.

He shrugged out of his suit jacket, tossing it on the chair. Loosening his tie, he walked over to the bed. The glowing red numbers on the alarm clock told him what he already knew. 9:30. Far too late to be getting home from work.

Toeing out of his shoes, he climbed onto the bed beside his slumbering wife. She stirred, as if sensing his presence, and muttered something incoherent. He reached over, laying a gentle hand on her hip, massaging her through the thin comforter that was pulled to her waist.

"Hmmm," she groaned.

"You're in bed early." His hand slid over the curve of her hip to her thigh.

"Yeah," she mumbled.

"Long day? Anything special happen?" He glanced over at her.

"Yes and no," she sighed deeply, then yawned.

"Beaman isn't working you too hard, is he?" His eyes narrowed a bit as he watched her slender shoulders shrug, her brown curls moving against the crisp cotton pillow case.

"No. Not really. I just can't wait to get cleared for field duty again." She reached up and found his hand, covering it with her own. "Jockeying a desk is just wearing me out. I'm beat." She yawned again.

"I guess you wouldn't be up for sex then, huh?" He smiled softly.

The bed shook slightly with her laughter. "Well, since you put it in such a romantic way . . ."

Lee laughed deeply, rolling on his side and spooning up behind her. Draping his arm around her waist he pulled her close, nuzzling the nape of neck. "I'm sorry. . . I guess I'm tired, too. "

Amanda turned her head, looking up and over her shoulder at Lee. He lowered his lips to hers, and her mouth opened, not to his kiss, but to the yawn she couldn't hold back.

"Now it's my turn to be sorry," she laughed softly, her voice muffled against his cheek.

"When did life get so complicated?" he groaned, rolling away from her.

"For me? Sixteen years ago." She rolled onto her back, her hand reaching over and finding his to hold.

"That long?" Lee squeezed her fingers. "Oh, right, he got his drivers' license today."

Looking over at him, her brown eyes met and held his hazel ones in a shared moment. Life was passing by so quickly these days. It was seldom that they found these soft, quiet moments to just share

their days, their feelings.

"Honestly?" She smiled softly. At his nod, she continued, "It's actually easier now."

"Easier?" His eyebrows drew together, and again his fingers tightened around hers. "How can that be? I mean, back then . . . Well, you didn't work outside the home when the boys were babies."

"No," she sighed, looking back at the ceiling. "But I also didn't have any help . . . any backup."

"Joe . . ." Lee began.

"Joe was never there." Amanda's husky voice cut in. She looked over at him with a small, almost sad smile. "Once he took the job with the EPA, he was never home . . . and even when he was . . . Well, even when his body was there, his mind wasn't. His heart wasn't. I felt like I was alone."

Lee released her hand, reaching up to place his open palm against her cheek. "I'm sorry."

She reached up and cupped her hand over his, turning her head to place a tender kiss against the work-toughened skin. "You shouldn't be; I never feel alone now."

"God, I love you." He rolled towards her, gathering her into his arms. "You're my whole world." His legs tangled with hers through the covers.

"No, just a part of it," she smiled, tucking her head under his chin and relaxing into his embrace.

"The best part," he asserted. "You're incredible."

"Not really." Amanda laughed lightly. "I just have a bit more experience than you . . . You'll catch up."

Lee's breath ruffled her hair and his arms tightened around her. "It's funny. I can remember when I could be out in the streets chasing the bad guys all day and come home and party all night."

"Oh, those were the good old days," she chuckled, moving to kiss his ear. "When you were young, single, and childless," she

whispered with laughter still evident in her tone.

At his, "And lonely," she pulled back and looked up into his eyes.

"It always surprises me, when you say that."

"What?" He rolled back for a moment to push the comforter and sheet down over her hips. He took her in his arms again, his hands lingering to caress the curve of her hip, then moving to stroke her back and ribs. "That I was lonely?"

"Yes." Her breath caught in her throat as his warm mouth found the sensitive skin of her neck and shoulders. As his lips rose to capture her earlobe, she drew back to look up into his eyes. "I guess I just never saw you that way. You always seemed so content with the life you had. . ." The side of her mouth quirked into a smile as she finished ". . . before I stumbled into it. "

"That was no stumble," Lee smiled back. "That was fate. I thought we'd decided that."

His hand trailed up her arm, a finger hooking the strap of her nightgown, pulling it off her shoulder. "And, besides, there's content. . . and then there's content." He gaze moved slowly from the freckled skin of her chest, languidly following the course of his hand as it traveled over her shoulder and up the column of her neck. Pushing his fingers into Amanda's tousled brown curls, he pushed her completely onto her back, feeling her body mesh with his as he pressed her into the softness of the mattress.

Their eyes met and mated, his face hovering only inches from hers. "It's not that I wasn't happy," he continued, the huskiness of his voice in contrast to the casual conversation, his hazel eyes holding her own in an almost hypnotic trance. "I was happy. I guess now what I feel is just. . . more complete. I don't feel the big rush to keep moving, keep doing, keep. . . fighting. It's hard to explain." He sighed, his eyes breaking from hers, his hands pushed through her hair, fanning it out on the pillow around her head.

"You don't have to, " Amanda murmured. The dim light of the bedside lamp softened the fine lines around his eyes, casting shadows on the smooth contours of his face. He looked tired. He looked sexy. But mostly, he just looked happy.

He nodded, almost imperceptibly, then pressed his lips to her

forehead.

"Isn't it amazing how you can be surrounded by people and still be alone?" Her words were warm against the stubbled texture of his cheek.

"Yes." He whispered as he moved to kiss the tip of her nose. "But what's really amazing is how one person can change all that. First you . . . then Lauren. One baby that doesn't even walk or talk yet . . ."

"Oh, yeah, that reminds me . . ." Amanda pushed against his chest until he drew back, gazing down at her, a flicker of puzzlement fighting with the passion that flooded his eyes. She reached between them, plucking at his loosened tie until she freed it. With a flick of her wrist she tossed it to the other side of the bed. As her fingers began working the buttons of his shirt, her eyes twinkled up into his. ". . . something special did happen today."

**The End**