

Daddy's First Kiss

Kathryn Knutson

“Her name is Hazel.”

Sean nodded slowly, trembling as he extended his hands. The infant was placed in his arms, and he felt as though he were going to cry. It was the first time he had seen her, let alone felt the weight of her small body. She was staring up at him, blue eyes widened, contentment and peacefulness dominating their emotion. After only a minute of being in her presence, he loved her so.

Sean's eyes flicked up to meet those of Hazel's mother. The woman was clearly on-edge, as if she did not trust him to hold his own baby. After all, what mother would trust a jailbird? He lifted a hand to stroke the soft skin of Hazel's temple.

“I'm not going to hurt her, Jenna,” he said, observing as she flinched in a very motherly fashion.

The woman glared at him as he turned his attention back to his daughter, wishing desperately to be out from beneath her hawk-like gaze. The instant Sean shifted in his chair, away from the furious woman, Jenna jumped to her feet, demanding that her baby be given back to her immediately.

He shook his head, refusing to take his eyes from the infant in his arms.

“Goddammit, Sean! Give her back to me!” Jenna shouted, quickly drawing the attention of everyone in the room, including the prison guards.

“I just want to hold her for a while! She's my baby too.”

“You've had enough time. I don't want you to hurt her!”

Sean opened his mouth to respond with equally stinging words, but he paused, feeling very powerful eyes on him, waiting for him to say something incriminating. Instead, he bent rapidly and placed the most gentle of kisses on Hazel's forehead. He inhaled deeply, taking a moment to savor the wonderful scent of baby skin and then everything happened very quickly.

Hazel was torn from his grasp, and before he could comprehend what was happening, he was forced to the floor violently.

Staring at the dirty white tiles, trying to ignore the pain in his shoulders and knees, Sean could hear Jenna's heels clicking as she left. He groaned softly, feeling hot tears slip down his face. Even then, he knew that encounter was the first and last time he would kiss his child; the first and last time he would hold her; likely the first and last time he would see her.

Squeezing his eyes tightly closed, Sean focused all of his attention on cementing Hazel's beautiful face in his mind. It was the only thing that could keep him sane for the duration of his confinement.

Kathryn Knutson is a senior in high school taking classes at Iowa State University for the betterment of her future.