

Somebody Else's Child

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The wind was howling across the moonlight sky. The temperature was dropping vastly outside of Samantha Smith's house as she stood in her kitchen making hot cocoa. Christmas would be on her doorstep in a matter of days. She had spent most of her adult life alone, never really finding true love. As she walked to the window to look out, she saw the Christmas star in the sky. She smiled as she thought to herself, *I wonder if I make a wish for true love, will it come true.* Samantha picked up a throw off the chair and walked to the couch to get comfortable for the night.

As she snuggled in for the night to watch television she heard the doorbell ring. Samantha walked over to the door and looked out the peep hole. She didn't see anybody, but she thought she would open the door to be sure. There in the middle of her porch in an infant seat was a newborn baby.

Samantha hurriedly picked the baby up and took her into the house. The air was freezing outside. Who would have done something like that to a child? She saw a note attached to the baby's shirt.

"Please take care of my baby. Her name is Jasmine Ann. I wouldn't leave her on the door like this if it was any other person, but I have been watching you. You're always home this time of the evening. I can't take care of her anymore and I don't want her left in an orphanage. My doctor's have only given me four weeks to live and I have to be sure that Jasmine will be safe."

She knew that she had to call somebody, but who? She dialed the police department and asked them to send over a detective to talk to her. Samantha prepared a bed for the child and read through all of the papers that the mother had left. At

least an hour had passed before Samantha heard a car pull up.

She went to the door to let the officer in. Standing in her doorway was a gorgeous man standing six foot tall with sandy blond hair. He looked like he worked out a lot; she could see his muscles through his shirt. Samantha snapped herself out of her thought long enough to introduce herself. "Hello, please come in. My name's Samantha."

The officer shook her hand. "Hello, I'm detective Anderson. What seems to be the problem tonight?"

"Well detective, I was sitting here watching television when my doorbell rang. When I went to the door, there was a baby there. She's over here." Samantha walked over and pointed to the sleeping baby. "I don't know what to do. She's the most precious thing I've ever seen. The mother left a stack of papers here." She handed him the papers to read.

Detective Anderson took the papers and studied them for a few minutes. "Well Ma'am, it looks like the mother took a lot of time and care in finding a home for her daughter."

"Wait a minute." Samantha stopped him. "What do you mean finding a home for her daughter?"

"She has had an attorney draw up adoption papers for somebody to sign."

Samantha fell to the couch in shock. "Are you saying that this baby is mine?"

He handed her the papers back. "Only if you want her to be. The paper work has been filled out. All you need to do is sign the papers and then mail them to this attorney. He will prepare the papers for you and mail you back some information."

Samantha was completely confused by that time. "Let me get this straight. All I have to do is sign these papers and I'm an instant mother?"

"I know this is a lot to take in. Think about it and I'll come back tomorrow to check on you and the child." He walked out the door leaving Samantha with the baby.

Samantha stayed up most of the night feeding and rocking Jasmine. She looked down at the little girl in her arms

and fell in love instantly. How could she turn that beautiful child away? She had fallen in love with her already.

The next day Samantha mailed off all of the papers to the lawyers office. It would be official within weeks. She was a mother now. She went to the store to stock up on baby items. That year would be her best Christmas ever. She had somebody to love and somebody to love her back unconditionally.

Jasmine was perfect. She was growing like a leaf as they say. It had been almost a year since she was dropped off to a new mother.

Samantha was decorating her house for Christmas as she did the year before. She knew that nothing would ever compare to the last Christmas she had. She couldn't imagine life without Jasmine. As she was hanging lights around the living room, she heard a knock at her door.

Samantha opened the door to a somewhat tall man with the bluest eyes she had ever seen. His hair was black as coal. "Can I help you?"

"Are you Samantha Smith?" he asked her.

"Yes, I am. What can I do for you?" She was a little uneasy at the moment.

The man pointed to the inside. "May I come in and talk to you for a minute?"

Samantha had no idea what was going on. "What's this all about?" she asked as she let him into her home.

"Jasmine," was all he said.

"What do you want with my daughter?"

"That's just it," the stranger said. "She's my daughter."

Samantha could feel her whole world crashing down before her. "What do you mean?"

"Let me introduce myself. My name is Lucas Thompson and I was dating Jasmine's mother. I didn't even know she had our child until last week when I got the letter from the lawyer saying that the adoption was on file. Since I didn't contest it there were no problems getting it all done."

Samantha could feel her hands shaking. Was he trying to take her daughter? "Please sit down. I'll make us some coffee."

She tried pouring the water into the coffee pot, but her hands were trembling too hard. The water was spilling all over the counter. She sat the coffee pot down and broke down in tears. She couldn't lose her little girl. She loved her as if she had delivered her herself.

Lucas walked over to her and handed her a tissue. "Calm down. I'm not here to take her away from you."

Samantha let out a huge breath. "You're not?"

"I want to try to work out some kind of arrangement with you. I know her mother isn't alive anymore and Jasmine needs a mother."

"She has a mother," Samantha angrily said.

"I'm not explaining this right. All I want it to be a part of my daughter's life. Is that so terrible?"

Samantha understood how he felt. She didn't know what she would do if he took Jasmine away from her. "What kind of arrangement are you talking about?"

Lucas was happy that she was willing to at least talk about it. "Well, I was thinking. She would live with you of course and then I could have some kind of visitation rights."

Samantha didn't know if she liked the idea, but she didn't really think she had much choice. She was afraid the adoption wouldn't be legal since he hadn't known about the baby.

"Okay. Let's work together to raise our daughter," she said.

They talked into the early morning hours laying out their schedules. Samantha agreed to give him two nights a week for three hours until Jasmine became a little older. With her being just one year old, she wanted her to stay close to home.

Lucas agreed to the terms and left for the night. He planned to come back the next night to pick up Jasmine for their first night out.

The next day Samantha worried herself to pieces about Lucas coming to pick up her daughter. She hated the idea of sharing Jasmine with a complete stranger, but knew she didn't have a choice. She heard the car pull up.

Samantha opened the door to Lucas. "Hello, Lucas. I'll get her bag."

"Samantha, would you like to come with us?"

Samantha couldn't believe he was asking her to go. "You would do that for me?"

"I know that you're worried about tonight. I want it to be an easy transition for Jasmine. I don't want to scare her."

"I would love to come. What are the plans for tonight?" she asked

Lucas glanced at the floor a little embarrassed. "I hadn't really thought of any place good to take her. Everywhere that popped into my mind seemed stupid."

Samantha smiled. She remembered not knowing the first thing about babies. "Why don't you just hang out here? I'll cook us dinner and we can get to know each other a little. We *are* our daughter's parents; we should at least know something about each other."

"That sounds great to me. I had no idea what I was going to do tonight. I was hoping you would come with us, but staying in sounds good too."

Samantha started cooking some chicken breasts. While the chicken was in the oven, she fixed mashed potatoes and green beans. While the chicken was finishing up, she put Jasmine in her high chair.

Samantha looked over at Lucas. "I like to give her healthy meals. She likes green beans and mashed potatoes and I cut her chicken into tiny bites for her."

"Thanks. Maybe you could give me a list of things she likes and dislikes," Lucas said.

Samantha finished feeding Jasmine and then set the table for her and Lucas. "Would you like tea, soda or milk to drink?"

Lucas said, "Iced tea would be great. Thanks."

Samantha sat their drink down on the table and then put their plates on the table. "So tell me Lucas, what do you do?"

Lucas sipped his tea. "I own the new sporting goods store on the other end of town. What about you? Do you work? Who watches Jasmine?" He stopped and took a breath. "Sorry for all of the questions. I have to admit something; I'm a little nervous tonight."

Samantha laughed. "You? What about me? I'm sitting here having dinner with a stranger that happens to be my daughter's father. To answer your questions though, I'm a writer. I stay home with Jasmine all day. I email my books to my editor. I love to be able to spend the extra time with Jasmine."

"That's wonderful. She needs her mother around while she's young."

They spent a few hours getting to know each other while Jasmine slept and then they decided to call it a night.

Samantha walked Lucas to the door. "I'm going to take Jasmine to the baby gym tomorrow if you would like to come with us you're more than welcome. They have all kinds of fun stuff for kids to play on. With the weather cooling off, I don't want to take her to the park."

Lucas didn't hesitate for a minute. "I'd love to come with you. I'll meet you here in the morning."

The next day they took Jasmine to the gym as planned and then spent the rest of the day together eating lunch and dinner. They seem to be inseparable the more time passed.

Samantha had spent the last few weeks building up a trust between her and Lucas. It was time to trust him fully with his daughter. She had agreed to let him take her over night. He would be there any minute to pick her up. By the time Samantha was finished packing Jasmine's things for the night, she had three bags packed. She didn't want her to forget anything.

Lucas showed up right on time to pick Jasmine up. He

let them have a few minutes to say their goodbyes and then he and Jasmine left for his house.

Samantha was sound asleep when she was awakened by the phone ringing. She glanced at the clock to see that it was two in the morning. She grabbed the phone. "Hello."

"I don't know what to do."

"Lucas is that you? What's wrong? Where's Jasmine?" Samantha was scared out of her mind.

"She's laying here on my bed, but she's burning up. The thermometer says 102.2. What do I do?"

Samantha jumped up, threw some jeans and a shirt on and ran for the door. She didn't even hang up her phone first. She hopped in her car and drove as quickly as she could to Lucas' house. She didn't even remember the drive over there. She was running up the porch stairs as she saw the front door opening.

"Come in. She's still burning up. I gave her some of that children's fever medicine that you had packed, but it isn't working." He explained everything that he had done already.

Samantha ran to her daughter and scooped her up into her arms. "Okay. Go run a cool bath. Don't make it too cold, just cool."

Lucas ran to the bathroom and did exactly as he was instructed. "It's ready."

Samantha carried Jasmine into the bathroom. "Here hold her for a minute." Then she stripped her clothes down to her bra and panties. She took her baby back from Lucas' hands and sat down in the cool bath water holding her baby. She laid Jasmine on her chest with water up to her waist. Samantha drizzled the cool water over her child until she could feel her fever breaking.

Lucas stood there watching. He was shocked by the way Samantha hadn't thought twice about anything. It all seemed to come naturally for her. He stared down at them in the bath tub. What would he have done without Samantha? "Thank you," he said.

"You're welcome. I would do anything for her. Now

take her for me so I can get out.”

Lucas took Jasmine and wrapped a towel around her as he waited for Samantha to get out of the water.

Samantha grabbed a robe that was hanging and put it on. “Get one of her bottles and fill it up with cold water. I want her drink as much of it as we can get her to. That will help bring the fever down.”

Lucas did what she asked. He couldn't believe the way she handled everything. He was a nervous wreck, but she was very level headed. “I think Jasmine is going to sleep for a while. If you want you can lie down on my bed and get a few hours sleep. I'll lie down on the couch.”

Samantha was exhausted. “If you don't mind?”

Without taking a second thought, Lucas took Samantha's hand into his hand and pulled her to him. He gently kissed her on the lips. He didn't know when it had happened, but he knew that he had fallen in love with her. It must have been seeing the way she loved his daughter. “Go ahead. Go get some rest.”

Samantha was shocked by the kiss. She turned to walk to his bedroom with her hand touching her lips. What just happened? Was he falling for her? Did she love him back? Samantha tossed and turned for thirty minutes debating all of the questions in her head. She drifted off to sleep without realizing it. She woke to the smell of bacon cooking.

Samantha walked into the kitchen and saw Jasmine sitting in her jumper bouncing up and down with a smile on her face. “What's my sweet girl doing this morning?” she asked her.

Lucas turned from the stove for a minute. “She's much better this morning. I don't understand it. What caused the fever?”

“She's cutting a couple of new teeth at the same time and that tends to cause fevers. She'll be okay.” She walked over to the coffee pot to get a cup. “Something smells good.”

“I thought you might want some breakfast after being up most of the night.” He sat two plates down on the table for

them. "Jasmine ate already.

Samantha sat down and started eating. She didn't know what to say about the kiss so she chose not to bring it up.

Lucas reached over the table and put her hand in his. "I don't regret kissing you."

"Why did you do that?" she asked.

"I want to be with you. I know we have this whole co-parenting thing down. It's all scheduled and filed and all that stuff, but somewhere in between all the formal stuff, I fell in love with you. I love the way you take care of Jasmine."

"Loving the way I take care of your daughter and loving me are two different things. Are you sure that you're not confusing the two?" Samantha pointed out.

"I'm sure I love you. We have been together everyday practically for months. I love everything about you. I never had the nerve until now to tell you. We make sense together. We're both Jasmine's parents and we do a great job at that, but I want more. I need to know something from you. How do you feel about me?"

"I think I love you, too. No, I'm sure I love you," Samantha answered.

Lucas walked over and picked Samantha up. He carried her to his bedroom and laid her down gently on the bed. He kissed her lips ever so softly. Lucas kissed her over and over.

"Lucas, are you sure?" She asked a little nervous.

"I've never been more sure about anything in my whole life."

Samantha had never felt that much in love before. She lay back on his bed as he made love to her until it felt as if time stood still. She felt his hands running through her hair softly.

Lucas met her lips with his and they seemed to stay together for an eternity. He moved slowly to her neck as he gently kissed her. "I love you, Samantha."

"I love you too, Lucas." She wrapped her arms around him and snuggled her head into his neck.

Lucas rolled over on his back and pulled Samantha to his chest. As he lay there with Samantha resting on his chest, he thought to himself, *Life couldn't be any better than it was right then.*

Samantha heard Jasmine laughing in the living room at the television. "We better get up. Our daughter will be getting lonely in there." She could have stayed in his arms forever, but she knew she had to get up.

Samantha walked into the living room and picked her little girl up. "Hi, Honey. I've had the best Christmas ever for two years in a row. First I got you and now I got your daddy." She danced around the living room holding her little girl.

That would be Jasmine's first year of opening presents. Samantha couldn't wait to give her all the gifts that were under the tree. "Lucas, we need to go back to my place so Jasmine can have her Christmas gifts."

Lucas came walking in all dressed. "Okay. That sounds good to me, but were you planning on going in the bathrobe or did you want to get dressed first?" he asked her as he tried not to laugh.

Samantha looked down at her clothes. She had forgotten that she was still in a bathrobe. "Oh, I guess I should go get dressed. Why don't you hold Jasmine?"

Lucas took Jasmine while Samantha went to get dressed. "Hi, Baby. This is going to be the best Christmas ever. I'm going to ask your mommy to marry me tonight."

Samantha finished getting dressed and they went back to her house to give Jasmine her gifts. They spent the next hour giving Jasmine gifts and taking pictures. Samantha said, "I think that was the last one."

Lucas stood and walked to her. "I have one more."

Samantha looked around. "I don't see anything."

"This one is for you." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a small red ring box. "Samantha, will you marry me?"

Tears starting forming in her eyes; she wiped them away with the back of her hand. "Lucas, I can't believe this.

Yes, I would love to marry you."

He put his arms around her. "You have made me the happiest man alive."

Samantha had the perfect family. Nothing was better than spending Christmas with her family.

The End