

### A Strange Holiday Gift

My husband and I always wanted a child, but I never could conceive one. We tried and tried for years seeing specialist after specialist, and trying tons of different things they recommended. Each doctor would tell us some different excuse but it all came down to one simple fact: I just wasn't able to carry a child. Even the time we tried artificial insemination my body just refused to cooperate. Needless to say....I felt terrible, and I know he did too. I was desperate for a child. I looked at parents playing with their kids in envy and loathing. I was becoming bitter and hateful to those around me. I was even starting to fight with my husband on a frequent basis. It felt as if my life was falling apart around me. I was terminated from my job because I let my depression show through and affect my work. I just couldn't focus on anything either....except wanting a baby.

Eventually we started to look at adoption, but where we lived at the time, it was difficult as well. You see, all the medical expenses from trying to have a child of our own left us rather broke and adoption isn't cheap either. Losing my job certainly didn't help matters any. Plus many centers in our area had fairly high standards and expectations we were struggling to meet. We were really beginning to lose hope, so I prayed, pleaded and begged to every deity and magical being I could think of on a nightly basis, "Please, let us have a child....I don't care how....just please give us a child." I guess someone heard because last Christmas that wish was answered but not how you would think....

It was an extremely cold and early winter that year for us, the first snow fall happening on Halloween. It continued to snow off and on through all of November and December with it snowing every day of the week leading up to Christmas Eve. That night was the coldest and hardest snow of all with near white out conditions. I was up late wrapping a few last minute gifts for my Husband's nieces and nephews as well as my cousin's two kids. I always did procrastinate on this sort of thing, as buying toys for them was a rather bittersweet ordeal for me at best. At about two o'clock in the morning there was a thump outside followed by what sounded like a knock at the door. Being the rather easily startled person I was, I stumbled into the living room and woke my husband who had dozed off on the couch with a box of stuff for his mom on his lap and tape and wrapping paper stuck to his hand and the rest of the roll sprawled out across him and the floor at this point. It was quite an amusing sight to say the least. He got up fairly quickly despite his mess and went to the door with me.

At first when we opened the door we didn't see anything. But as we began to shut it we heard another odd noise that sounded like something moving quickly through the ever green shrubs along the front of our home. My husband stepped outside to have a better look and that's when I saw the basket sitting under the bush that overlapped the porch some. It was like a scene out of one of those other orphan stories. I slowly walked up to it, curious and a bit puzzled, and carefully picked it up as my husband watched in confusion. When I looked inside I almost dropped the basket from shock. My husband ran up to me and looked as well. After staring in disbelief for a moment he took the basket from me and carried it inside, carefully coaxing me in as well while I was trying to regain my composure. We both went to our bedroom and set the cold and mildly damp basket on the bed. In the better lighting we noticed that what we thought we saw was in fact accurate, it was indeed a child....but not

like one we had ever seen. This one had brilliant white fur, a pointy nose, fox-like ears, and a tail! It even had fox like feet!

I went and got some clean towels from the bathroom and took this pup like creature out of the basket, unwrapping his now cold and damn blanket to begin drying *him* off; as it was in fact a male. He whimpered a little as I thoroughly dried him off and bundled him back up while still in a bit of surprise at what I was now holding. This was no normal looking fox. He had hands instead of paws, and looked to have a body slightly similar to a normal human infant in a way. As I wrapped him bad up and sat on the bed to hold him, the basket fell to the floor, spilling the other blanket and two toys onto the ground along with what appeared to be a rather damp letter. My husband picked up the toys and the letter and looked and them a moment. One of the toys was a female looking, white, fox plushy with a human like build and the other being a rattle with many spiritual looking and fox like charms on it. He set the toys on the bed next to me as I held the child close helping it to fall back asleep. My husband then carefully opened the letter and began to read it:

“Madam:

I am in very poor health do to a fatal injury and don’t have much longer to live. You see, I lost my home shortly after giving birth and have been roaming the area with my kit ever since and ended up getting hit by a stray shot from some deer hunter yesterday. I patched myself up the best I could but it’s no good. I’m growing weak even as I write this. By now I imagine you’re wondering why you, and why this fox child. Well, two nights ago I was looking for food and stumbled across your home and I saw you sitting on your porch sipping what smelled to me as hot cider. You appeared to be crying so I sat in the snow and watched for a moment from behind a nearby bush. After you finished your drink you looked up at the sky and begged for a child of your own after repeatedly asking the Heavens why you were not able to conceive...This sight managed to stick with me and when I realized I was going to die from my injury I decided I wanted you to have my child. I know you will love and cherish him and not let his appearance trouble you. Your desire and desperation for a child of your own proves that he will be in good hands. I know he is not yet weaned so I left some of the last of my milk in a few jars I buried in the snow by your porch; they are marked by a couple of large rocks I put near them. It’s a good thing I always saved what he didn’t drink I suppose. It should be enough till you can get some formula or induce a supply from yourself. The plush doll is one I made of myself for him to have while I wasn’t around or out hunting for food so he would always have his mother at his side. Make sure he knows when he is older. That baby rattle is one I made as well out of some old charms my mother gave me that always seemed to calm me down. It appears to have a similar effect on him. Mom always said those charms were magical. Who knows, maybe they are. Anyway, take good care of my little Winterpaw for me. I must go now as I am fading fast. I will be down by the nearby creek under a big white ash tree. Please bury me if you are able, and fret not over my death. I’m glad I was able to make your dream come true for you and bring you joy in my loss. My pup is your pup now, may he show you the love I know you will in return.

Much Love,

Alexia Winterpaw Snowheart.”

My husband and I were both in tears at this point. He took a seat next to me and held me close and I held the poor orphaned pup tight against my chest. We sat there for a good hour, with me rocking the pup in my lap, and my husband holding me in return. Eventually he got up and took the basket outside to retrieve the milk that the pup’s mother left. When he returned I was quite surprised to see almost 9 full mason jars worth. I guess she had been saving it up for a while just in case. My husband took a turn holding our new child while I went to see if I could find one of the baby bottles we got a while back when I thought I may have been pregnant. I succeeded in my mission and proceeded to warm up a fresh bottle of his mother’s milk seeing as Winterpaw was getting a little fussy. I tended to feeding him while my husband set up a make shift baby bed for him next to ours. After the pup was fed and in his little bed we both turned in for a short rest before having to be up again for Christmas.

We both awoke a couple hours later when our alarm went off at seven AM. My husband and I both got dressed in our winter gear and bundled up our new pup and headed down to the nearby creek. It took us about fifteen minutes or so of searching, but we found his mother right where she said she would be under a white ash, covered in snow. We gently brushed her off and straightened up her gown and picked up her satchel. I put the satchel over my shoulder and knelt by her with my new son and lightly kissed her soft forehead. I looked into her lovely blue eyes and whispered, “Thank you... I promise I will care for and cherish Winterpaw with all my heart and soul. Rest well knowing that he will be loved.” I gently closed her eyelids and made her look nice then posed her with Winterpaw to take a quick photo of her holding him so he would know what his birth mother was like when he got older. I then looked in her satchel and found 2 more of her dresses, as well as a locket and a small note. The note read:

“Please take my belongings as a gift, and to remember me by, as they may help you care for my son in the future. The locket is special and has been in my family for quite a long time. It has a charm on it similar to the ones on the rattle. Please, wear it until he is old enough to. May it help and guide you in the years to come.”

My husband then carefully wrapped Alexia up in a nice blanket and dug a resting place for her under the tree. After a few more quiet moments he laid her to rest and buried her. On the tree we carved, “Here lies our beautiful Alexia Winterpaw Snowheart, A Beloved Mother, and A Kind Hearted Soul. ?-2015”

Life hasn’t been quite the same since that day. Little Winterpaw has grown a lot in the last year, as he can already walk and such. Quite well I might add for a one year old, but that seems normal for our kind. I might also admit those dresses Alexia had came in rather handy as well. You see, I took to wearing that locket from the moment we buried Alexia, and it did help us care for him, within a few weeks I had a full milk supply for him and after 2 months I grew a tail and ears, and within 4 months I looked a lot like Alexia had, although with ever so slightly different marking and eyes. My husband slowly changed as well about a month after a nice romantic night, which led to me now being pregnant with our soon to be second child. We also met some other foxes in the area, which invited us to a nice

community of them in which we wouldn't be bothered or harassed by anyone outside of our new home. As far as our old family is concerned, we still see them from time to time, but they are having a little trouble adjusting to our new look, however life couldn't be any better. I plan to lay flowers by Alexia each Christmas as a thank you, and to let her know all is well, because her gift likely saved my life.....

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

~ Marian Alexia Foxnight~