

# Star Child

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Rated: PG

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Summary: This is the first in a series of weird elsewhere fics where the author plays loose and fast with... well... everything. Sam and Ellen Lane are pretty much the last people that would take in a foundling child. But, one night, they do. Sam and Ellen are bound together by a lie that is so much, much bigger than they know. The author knows that she is terrible at summaries. *[Site editors disagree.]*

Story Size: 3,589 words (19Kb as text)

*a/n: I know absolutely nothing about childbirth, miscarriages, etc., etc. Also, 20 minutes of studious google research couldn't find me a conclusive answer about when Lois Lane's actual birthday is supposed to be so I invented one for her. I'm planning on there being more stuff here, though who knows when that will be... mostly unbeta-d so all mistakes are mine etc., etc.*

*I own nothing, and have like \$0 to my name. yada. yada. yada.*

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Dr. Sam Lane had decided to work the overnight shift the night of April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1967.

He'd gotten into a huge, blow-out argument with his pregnant wife Ellen earlier in the day. He'd come home later than usual after work the previous night, and had come home without the candy that Ellen had phoned his office and bothered his secretary about. He'd been even more stressed than usual after a surgery he'd assisted on in the morning had gone terribly, so he'd headed off to a local bar and had spent a few hours there after his shift let out. Unfortunately, he'd forgotten that Ellen was expecting him back at their apartment. When he'd finally made his way back to their apartment, Ellen had demanded to know where he'd been; he lied and told her that he'd taken a double shift. He still didn't know why he'd lied to her, but the deed was done. It hadn't taken Ellen, clever as she was, any time to figure out that he'd lied to her. If Sam had thought that Ellen was angry before, that 'anger' was little more than irritation compared to her fury at his lie. The couple had thrown nasty accusations and harsh words at one another all morning, both far too stubborn to relent and admit defeat. Coming to the hospital had been nothing short of relief for Sam; arguing with Ellen was like arguing with the sun – you could never win. He was exhausted, so he'd volunteered to work an overnight shift.

It was well past midnight, and now April 11<sup>th</sup> when Sam decided to take his smoke break. He exited the building, and walked down the street to Pulaski Park, a nearby public park that he knew would be nearly empty at this time of night. As soon as he made it into the park he pulled out a new cigarette from the silver case in the breast pocket of his jacket. He tapped the butt of

the cigarette on his thumb, the action an unconscious habit. He then reached into his left pants pocket and pulled out a matchbook; he took the last match from it and lit it. The light of the match illuminated his face for a second, and then it was gone. The only light left was the orange glow of the tip of his cigarette. He continued to walk down the footpath in the park until he came to a bench. The bench was a place he'd been coming to for his smoke breaks ever since he'd started working at Met General. Sam stared up at the sky, trying not to think about Ellen, about how guilty he felt for arguing with her, for leaving her pregnant and alone for the night. The night sky was, of course, devoid of stars; this was Metropolis, after all.

Suddenly the sky was filled with light: bright, nearly blinding light. What looked like an enormous shooting star was headed straight for the other end of the park. Sam had not come to his current position, an up-and-coming doctor, without having a healthy amount of motivated curiosity. This curiosity propelled Dr. Lane to get up from the bench, put out his cigarette, and, as if in a trance, make his way towards the place where the shooting star had to have landed. He knew that he was in the right place when he saw a sudden flash of light through the stand of thick bushes that lined the footpath on the east end of the park. He then abandoned the footpath entirely and ventured out into the grass and through the thick bushes. When he came to the spot where there should have been some lump of still red-hot celestial rock he found nothing. Just as he was about to turn around and shove his way back through the bushes to the footpath, the little yellow light provided by the park's lamps was extinguished completely. Sam found himself in close to pitch blackness. He froze, unsure of what to do.

He heard the sound of a woman crying. He turned around, looking for the source of the sound, but then remembered that he would have been unable to see a thing. The next logical course of action was, then, to find his way towards the woman by ear. He pushed through another stand of bushes and found, on the other side of them a woman, dressed in strange robes. She was, oddly enough, glowing. In her arms was a tiny, sleeping, dark-haired infant. The woman looked up at the sound of Sam approaching. The look on her face at that precise moment, Sam would later note, was one of pure terror. She protectively clutched the infant closer to her breast, and shrank back from Sam. Then, the woman yelled at him in a language that Sam had never heard before, and one that he would later realize he couldn't place at all. When Sam didn't respond, the woman seemed to relax some.

"Ma'am?" Sam said, trying his best to sound a non-threatening as possible.

The woman didn't respond.

"Are you okay, ma'am?" Sam asked softly.

The woman swallowed, and shifted the child about in her arms so that she could have a free hand. With her newly freed hand she wiped her eyes.

"Is there anyone else about?" she asked him. Her voice was small and quivering.

"Not that I know," Sam said.

"Good," the woman said. She sniffed her nose and gave Sam a soft, sad smile. "I need to know if there is a good, safe place

around here where I can leave her,” she said, looking down at her child.

“Leave-?” Sam said, “your daughter?”

“Yes.” She sounded very certain about this.

“There’s a hospital a block from here, ma’am,” Sam said, “We take in infants, no questions asked,” he said, “I’m a doctor there.”

“She’ll be safe if I leave her there?” the woman asked, biting her lip in anxiety.

“We’ll make sure that she is healthy, get her into the system, and give her over to Child Protective Services,” Sam said.

“Child Protective Services?” the woman said, the words coming out her mouth as though she had never heard of them used in such a way. “Will they guard her with their lives?”

Sam didn’t know what to say.

“Sir,” the woman said, her voice wavering again, “my daughter’s father, he - ” she choked for a moment, “he might come after her, and I can’t protect her from him, from anyone.”

Sam still didn’t have anything to say. Instead he decided to wait for her, to let her keep talking as long as she needed to. She didn’t look like a battered woman – there were no outward signs of abuse, no bruises, cuts or scars, but that didn’t mean much. In his time in the medical profession Sam Lane had learned that many battered women learned well enough how to hide the signs of the abuse they’d endured. The way the woman spoke, Sam thought, was what gave her away.

“He doesn’t know,” the woman said, “her father, he doesn’t know that -” She sucked in another shuddering breath. “He’s a dangerous man, Doctor,” she said, “the Lord, he will kill her if he finds her, or worse, he’ll raise her as his own.”

“Child Protective Services will take care of her for you, ma’am, and they will do their best to keep her safe from this man,”

The woman let out a sigh of relief. “There’s something else, Doctor,” she said, “Will she be loved?”

“I -” Sam said.

“You don’t know if these child protectors will love her or not?” The woman asked sharply.

“No,” said Sam, “I don’t know. It doesn’t always work out that way.”

“Is there some other human I can give her to then?” the woman asked, “Some other child protector who is not a part of this service?”

She almost certainly had never been to Metropolis, was not an American, Sam thought.

“There’s no one else,” Sam said.

“No one?” the woman asked.

“No.”

“Oh.” Said the woman, her voice was the smallest and softest that Sam had heard it.

There was a heavy silence that hung between them, and then,

“Take her,” the woman said, “anywhere is better than where it is that we come from,”

She handed Sam her swaddled daughter. The infant was somehow *still* asleep.

Sam took the child into his arms gently. The woman leaned over the child, and laid a kiss on her forehead. Then she whispered something to the child in her native tongue. With this done, the

woman stepped away from Sam, leaving a good foot between them.

“There’s one last thing,” the woman said.

She reached under the neckline of her robe and pulled out a small, round locket. The locket looked to be some golden color, and had a plate on the front of it with a bouquet of delicately painted red flowers.

“Make sure that she gets this, Doctor,” the woman said, “on her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, when she becomes a woman.”

The woman held the tiny locket out in her hand to Sam, waiting expectantly for him to take from her. Sam stepped towards her, and shifted the child around so that he was holding the infant in his left arm, leaving his right hand free. He grabbed the locket, and stuffed it into the left breast pocket of his jacket along with his case of cigarettes.

“I’ll see to it,” Sam said, almost sure that he was outright lying to this woman.

The woman smiled at him, “Thank you, Doctor sir.”

She turned then, to leave, hazarding a short last glance at her daughter, face full of love and pain. As soon as her head was turned, she vanished, as though she had never been there in the first place, leaving Sam standing in the grass, in the pitch dark, holding a child that couldn’t have been more than a few hours old. A second later, the park lamps flashed back on, all at once. It was then that Sam noticed he was standing in a pile of glittering dust.

“Stardust,” he murmured.

It was 2:15 AM on Tuesday April 11<sup>th</sup>, 1967.

The child shifted in his arms, letting out a small sleepy sound before stilling. She had no idea that her mother had just abandoned her, no idea that she was orphaned. Sam stared at the glittering dust for a long time, transfixed by it. Some of it stuck on the tips of his dress shoes, and some of it was on the child’s forehead, some on his arms, some on hers.

His reverie was broken by the sound of a familiar young woman’s voice; Sandra, the secretary was calling for him.

“Dr. Lane!” she called out, “Dr. Lane!”

Sam sighed and made his way, as carefully as he could back through the two stands of bushes to the footpath. Once back on the path it took him only a few moments to run straight into Sandra. The young woman was red in the face, and looked quite flustered.

“Oh!” she cried, “Dr. Lane! I’m sorry I -,” she said so quickly that she practically tripped over her own words, “Never mind! We don’t have time for this,” she continued.

Sandra grabbed him by the arm, and dragged him back down the footpath, out of the park and towards the hospital car park. She didn’t seem to take any notice of the (miraculously) still sleeping infant in Sam’s arms.

“Your wife called, Dr. Lane,” Sandra said, puffing between words, “there’s something wrong, sir and – and -- she couldn’t describe it,” she said.

Sam said nothing.

“She sounded scared though,” Sandra added as an afterthought.

At those words, the situation settled in on Sam, and panic filled him.

“Keys!” he growled, “Sandra, do you have my keys?” he ground out.

Sandra nodded quickly and dug out Sam’s keyring, which Sam grabbed, roughly from her hand.

“Go back to the hospital!” he told her, sharply, “and tell Dr. Pagner that I won’t be coming back in,” he said.

Sandra nodded, her blonde curls bouncing. Sam got into his car, and fired up the engine. The slumbering infant was still in his left arm, but he’d forgotten about her entirely – panic had seized him so entirely; Ellen wouldn’t have called the hospital asking for him if things weren’t bad.

Driving out of the car park he passed Sandra again, and narrowly avoided mowing her down.

“Dr. Lane!” she called out, “What about the baby?”

But Sam wasn’t listening, and he was already gone. Sandra’s voice was swallowed up by the darkness.

Later, Sam wouldn’t be able to recall much from the drive home. He tore through the empty Metropolis streets, driving forty, fifty miles over the speed limit. It was only after he’d parked the car, and sprinted up the three flights of stairs to their apartment that he remembered the strange woman’s daughter, the infant still in his arms. He’d deal with her later, he decided; there was no way that Sam would be driving back to the hospital now.

He ran into the apartment, letting the door slam loudly behind him. Ellen was lying on the floor, moaning in pain. There was blood all over the carpet, all over her skirt.

“Sam,” she rasped.

“I’m here,” he murmured.

He turned away from his wife and set the infant down on the sofa.

“I think,” Ellen managed, “I’m losing the baby, Sam.”

There were tears in her eyes.

Their earlier arguments felt inconsequential; he was angry at himself in that moment – why hadn’t he been there for Ellen, why hadn’t he just admitted that he’d been wrong? Was God punishing him?

He came over to her and looked her over. Ellen had instinctively known the truth – she was miscarrying. Their child was due in a little less than a month, but now...

“I’m sorry,” he said to Ellen. He wasn’t sure what it was that he was the sorriest about: the lie, the arguments, the insults, the leaving her for the overnight shift or their current situation.

She seemed to understand.

“I love you,” he said. The words felt empty, not enough.

Ellen screamed.

It was 2:45 AM.

Two grueling, horrible hours later, Ellen Lane gave birth to a tiny, dark haired daughter.

The child was already dead.

It was 4:45 AM.

Ellen clutched onto her tiny, dead child for nearly a half hour, numb and silent before Sam took the child from her. He took their daughter to the kitchen and washed her tiny body clean in the kitchen sink, dried her off with a soft, green dishtowel and dressed her in a tiny pair of pajamas that Ellen’s mother had given them. Then he laid the infant down on the counter, and went to the back

of the apartment, to the bedroom. He rifled through Ellen’s closet until he found a bright blue shoe box. Sam, heavy hearted, returned to the kitchen. He swaddled his daughter’s body in the green towel and laid her out in the blue shoebox. He placed a kiss on her forehead.

“I love you,” he murmured. The words felt real this time.

In the living room, Ellen was still lying on the floor. She wasn’t sure she could even stand. She was certain that she didn’t have any feeling left in her. She hadn’t been sure that she’d even wanted their child before, but now – oh now she wanted their daughter in a way that she didn’t fully understand. And... And... She had lost the child. It hurt less to think about in the abstract, to pretend that she hadn’t thought of names, that they hadn’t made preparations, that this was happening to someone else. Ellen looked down at her flesh and blood child with such tenderness, an expression that was alien to her face, and placed a kiss on the infant’s cold forehead. The kiss left behind traces of Ellen’s signature dark colored lipstick.

“I love you,” she said, each word falling slowly from her lips.

It was 5:36 AM.

Sam’s foundling child woke for the first time. Her rich brown eyes stared right at Ellen. The girl began to cry, realizing that her mother wasn’t there with her. This was when Ellen noticed the infant. Sam had come in carrying the child...

Where had she come from?

She had a healthy set of lungs on her – she was full-out wailing now. Sam came back to the living room with the blue shoe box in his hands. He sat down on the floor with Ellen and handed her the box. Ellen began to cry again.

“Why us?” she asked Sam.

“I don’t know,” he murmured, holding her.

The foundling girl wailed even louder.

The Lanes didn’t pay her any attention; the couple were caught in their misery.

It was 6:15 AM when the Lanes finally turned to the foundling girl.

“Where did she come from, Sam?” Ellen asked.

“It’s a long story,” Sam said.

He told Ellen a story. It wasn’t the full truth.

“What are we going to do about her?” Ellen asked.

Sam wasn’t sure which baby Ellen was referring to. “Ours?”

“The other one,” Ellen said, “She’s all alone.”

Ellen began to cry again, and she’d only barely just dried her eyes. At 6:32 AM Ellen held the foundling child for the first time. Something happened then, something Ellen would never be able to explain, but suddenly she knew that she wanted to keep this child. It sounded callous in her own head, but she’d been struck by a longing for the very thing that had been taken from her by nature.

This was when the Lanes told their first lie together. It was 6:45 AM.

Sam left Ellen in the living room with the foundling child, and took the shoe box with him. He drove to the cemetery, and entered his family mausoleum, shoe box in one hand and crowbar in the other. He came to the final resting place of his own mother, and carefully, silently, he pried the shelf open with the crowbar. He

pulled the coffin out, and opened it. He slipped the shoe box into the coffin.

“We love you so much, baby girl,” he whispered before setting the shoe box down, letting it free of his hands.

He closed the coffin. “Look after her for us, mother,” he said.

The dead remained silent.

He closed everything up and left, locking the mausoleum behind him.

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Ellen had finally managed to get up. She cleaned herself, and the foundling child. She hadn't been able to get the child to stop crying. Then, she realized that child must be hungry. She didn't have anything suitable to prepare. She didn't know what else to do, but the child did. The infant found her way to Ellen's breast and suckled it, calming at once. This was how Sam found them when he returned, Ellen, sitting on the kitchen floor, back against the refrigerator breastfeeding the infant.

Sam Lane wasn't a pediatric doctor, he didn't have anything to do with infants or children in his personal medical practice, but he was still a doctor. He drew up a birth certificate for the foundling child.

The tiny, foundling child was Lois Lane. Born to Ellen and Samuel Lane in their home at 4:45 AM.

This was a lie that the Lanes would keep for the rest of their lives. It was just one tiny lie, but it was a lie pregnant with other lies.

The Lanes would find that they were both excellent liars. This would be a good thing, and a terrible thing. But that morning at 7:37 AM it didn't really matter yet. Less than an hour later Ellen Lane fell asleep, and Sam took Lois from her. He held the child – his daughter who was not his daughter - in his arms. She was awake and silent, staring at him in curiosity and wonderment, Sam imagined.

“Sleep well, Starchild,” he murmured. Lois Lane drifted off to sleep and Sam laid her in the crib they'd prepared months earlier.

It was 8:34 AM when all three Lanes were finally asleep.

Somewhere in the great beyond, a young, trembling dark-haired woman with silvery eyes smiled down on them. She hummed a lullaby that her mother had taught her when she was a child. In her sleep, Lois heard the song, and it stayed there, just beyond her conscious mind, sleeping.

THE END