Summary

Luke's newborn eyes were clear and innocent and deep as an ocean. Sarah Jane found them unnerving, staring at her like that. It was as if he was trying to find himself in her. That was probably exactly what he was doing. Sarah Jane wasn’t sure she was ready for that kind of responsibility. But she was in for it, now. Nothing to be done but plunge ahead. Two chapters.
“What is the function of clothing?”

“What?” Sarah Jane looked over at the boy’s head, peering over the top of the dressing room door. She and Maria had decided it was important to get him out of the white uniform the Bane had suited him in and get him into some modern English fashions. As Maria went zipping through the store looking out things that were fashionable, Sarah Jane stood outside the dressing room to watch him. She’d realized that he couldn’t be left alone when they were still in the parking lot.

“What is that?” he’d asked.

They’d looked, and seen a dog tied to a fence post outside the store. “It’s a dog.”

The boy had gone over to it. “It is not human. Is it from another planet, like the Bane?”

“No. It’s an animal.”

“What does it do?” He’d reached down and tried to pick the puppy up by its ears. The animal shrieked, and a woman coming out of the store had shouted at him. “Hallo, shouting woman,” the boy said, unable to understand that he had hurt the animal, or that in doing so he was doing anything wrong.

It wasn’t even the woman’s dog, but that didn’t matter. Sarah Jane knew that left alone, this construct could kill someone, without knowing it, and without meaning to.

“These clothes you ask me to put on. What is their function? I assume it is not to keep warm, as the environment inside structures appears to be optimal for human exposure. Yet all humans seem to wear them.” He frowned. “The Bane did not. The dog did not.”

“They’re a human social normative,” Sarah Jane said. “For both protection and modesty.”

“What is modesty?”

“In this context, it means the concealment of certain sexual characteristics,” Sarah Jane said. She’d never been so glad she was a journalist. Choice of words was vitally important here.

“But this garment covers more than just sexual characteristics,” the boy said.

A million things to say entered Sarah Jane’s head, regarding cultural norms and social taboos, ranging from middle-eastern veils to New Guinea penis sheaths, and she dismissed them all. “The why isn’t important now. I’ll give you an encyclopedia to read to tell you about Earth customs, and you can ask Mr. Smith specific questions about alien cultures. For now, Maria and I are going to tell you what’s expected of you. You can question the why about it once you know the what. Maria knows what teenage boys are supposed to wear in twenty-first century England, and that’s what she’s selecting for you.”

“And what are you doing?”
“What do you mean?”

“Maria is selecting garments. Are you here to watch me dress?”

“No,” Sarah Jane said. “You can figure that out for yourself. Clothing is fairly self explanatory. Seams are usually inside, and the tags generally go in the back.”

“Oh.” The boy ducked back inside the booth, and various rustlings indicated that he was getting the clothing on. “It’s on,” he said.

“Come out and let me see,” Sarah Jane said.

The boy exited the booth. He had listened to her instructions, and the clothing was not on inside out or backwards. But the undershorts were atop the trousers, and the shirt dangled. Sarah Jane bit her lip in order not to laugh. “I see the sizes we selected fit you,” she said. “Go back and get your old clothes back on.” She realized what she’d just said. “No, go back, close the door, take these off, and then put the old clothes back on. Then hand me these clothes so I can purchase them. We’ll pick the rest out based on these sizes.”

The boys eyes were lost, confused, just a trifle scared, but he nodded and returned dutifully to the booth.

Maria came up with another couple of jeans and some sweatshirts. “If those don’t fit, I found these,” she said.

“We’re good,” Sarah Jane said. But before she left the store, she collected a menswear catalog, so that the boy could see how these things were supposed to go on.

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Maria had to go back home for dinner, so Sarah Jane was left alone with the boy. “We should put those up in your room,” she said as they entered the house.

“My room?” he asked. “This is my room, isn’t it?” He held out his arms. “How much room do I need?”

“A room in a house,” she said. She’d noticed that if she was careful to define things, that some latent memory in his head clicked, and it made sense. Either that, or he just took everything she said on faith. That was something — there was a lot of faith in those newborn eyes. “I have a guest room. Why don’t we...” she gestured up the stairs. He cocked his head for a moment, then seemed to decide she meant him to follow her and started after, hesitantly.

She opened the door to the little-used guest room, and frowned. It looked so spartan and bare, not at all homely. She’d never needed to make her guest room feel homely. She only ever used it for her nephew Brendan, and he was so used to sleeping on the floor of some robotics office that he never even noticed how barren it was. He’d only been there three times, anyway. He was fascinated by K-9, but they weren’t particularly close anymore. He’d grown up and gotten his own life. That was what everyone did.

Then Sarah Jane stopped. The boy was standing behind her with a bag of clothes in his hand, looking as lost as if he’d just been dropped on the side of the highway. “What is this place?”
“This will be your room,” she said. “The things that you own, your clothes, your books, they’ll go in here. This will be where you sleep.”

“What’s sleep?”

Sarah Jane took in a breath. “It’s a biological process for rest and regeneration of internal functions.”

“But what is it?”

Sarah Jane sighed. She sat down on the edge of the bed. “You’ll lie down here,” she said, “and close your eyes, and lose consciousness.”

The boy looked, if anything, frightened, but he turned his attention to the bags in his arms. “Where do I put these?”

“Here, let me help you,” Sarah Jane said, instead of trying to explain to him. She showed him how things hung on hangers and how to fold trousers and put them in drawers. Even the function of drawers was novel to him. Several times he opened and closed, then opened and closed, then opened and closed a drawer, just to see how it worked. Just as he was closing the drawer he stopped and pulled back his hand, examining the fingers. “What are these?” he asked.

“That’s your hand.”

“I know, I use it to manipulate things,” he said. He touched a fingernail. “But what are these?”

“Fingernails.”

“What is their function?”

“They’re a vestigial remnant of when humans were merely primates,” Sarah Jane said. “Before we evolved intelligence. Primates use them to pick up bugs and scratch off parasites. We still use them to scratch,” she realized.

“I don’t know anything,” the boy said suddenly.

“You’ll learn. You’ve already learned a lot. Its still new to you.”

“I wasn’t born today,” he said with a frown. “That’s something I remember. Something someone said once, to tell someone that he knew what was what.” He looked up at Sarah Jane. “I was born today.”

His eyes were clear and innocent and deep as an ocean. Sarah Jane found them unnerving, staring at her like that. It was as if he was trying to find himself in her. That was probably exactly what he was doing. Sarah Jane wasn’t sure she was ready for that kind of responsibility. But she was in for it, now. Nothing to be done but plunge ahead. “We need to make you legal,” she said. “According to the records, you don’t exist. So we’ll have to go and change the records. Let’s go upstairs and talk to Mr. Smith.”

It was only a work of a few minutes to get Mr. Smith to understand what was needed from him — official records, falsified birth certificates, NHS number, adoption papers. “What name shall I enter?” Mr. Smith asked.
Both Sarah Jane and the boy stared at each other. “We’ll get to that,” Sarah Jane said.

A ring at the doorbell made them both jump. Sarah Jane was glad to go down the stairs, and find Maria. It was easier when Maria came between them and took the boy’s eyes off her. He was making her nervous. She’d never realized until just now how very isolated she had become. The idea of him depending on her terrified her. But at the same time, she couldn’t imagine sending him away. “Help me, Doctor,” she whispered under her breath.

Maria made him put on his new clothes, asking what he was still in that clinical thing for, and Sarah Jane was glad that she’d slipped the catalog onto his bed. Sure enough, when the boy came down to the garden, his clothes looked proper, as if he’d spent some minutes studying the models in the pages.

Sarah Jane found it much easier interacting with Luke — as they decided to call him — while Maria was with them. Perhaps it was Maria’s youth, annealing her against his strangeness. But what could be so strange about him? Sarah Jane asked herself. You’ve known aliens and future beings and robots, befriended monsters too terrifying to consider. What is so terrifying about an innocent boy?

She really couldn’t put her finger on it.

They went inside after Maria went home, and Sarah Jane realized she had no idea what to do next. “Well, I... I suppose I should feed you...”

The boy looked up at her. “Feed me to what?’”

Given the statement, Sarah Jane was surprised to see him looking at her with complete trust in his innocent eyes. “Give you food,” she said. “This way.”

“Food, and drink,” Luke said, repeating what she’d said earlier in the day. “Drink is like the bubble shock.”

“Not... usually.”

“I mean, it is liquid.”


Teaching him table manners was quickly accomplished, but very strange. She couldn’t help but be reminded, at every turn, that he had been born that morning. Yet he learned so phenomenally fast, and sometimes he surprised her by saying, “Yes, I remember.”

“How could you remember that?” she asked once.

He looked confused. “I don’t... know. Sometimes... it is like there is someone else... or was someone once... who remembered something, and told me. Or... is telling me...” He looked up. “I was made up of different people, yes?”

“Yes,” Sarah Jane said.

“Well,” Sarah Jane said. “I think it’s time we went to bed.”

“All right.”

He was almost painfully complacent. She showed him up to her guest room — his room — and handed him some pajamas. “You should take those off, and put these on,” she said.

“Why should I change clothing so often?”

“Hygiene,” Sarah Jane said, “mostly. And convention. Once you wear clothing, we put it in a hamper...” she trailed off as she realized the guest room was without one. “We’ll get you a hamper,” she added. “And then we wash them.”

“All right,” Luke said, and he began to take off his shirt.

Sarah Jane backed away. “You shouldn’t get undressed in front of people,” she said.

“Why not?”

“As before,” Sarah Jane said. “Modesty.”

“Never?”

“There are exceptions,” Sarah Jane said. “But until you learn them, don’t take off your clothes in front of people. I’ll leave you alone.”


Sarah Jane waited.

“I put these on,” he indicated the pajamas. “And then what?”

“You get into bed and go to sleep.”

Luke nodded. “All right.”

“Good night, Luke.”

“Good night?”

“It’s what people say when they’re about to go to bed. Good night, Luke.”

“Good night, Sarah Jane.”

Sarah Jane retreated to her own room, but she had a hard time sleeping. She missed K9, as she always did when she missed the Doctor... and she found herself missing the Doctor, fiercely. There was something as disturbing in Luke’s young eyes as there had been in the Doctor’s ancient ones. She went up to the attic and tried to search online about child rearing, but in the end, there was nothing to teach her how to raise a teenage baby, with a genius intellect, less than twenty-four hours old.
Sarah Jane dragged herself out of bed as morning came, and went down to make tea, as was her custom. She made toast for breakfast, and sat at the table waiting for Luke to come down. She waited for an hour, until Maria surprised her by knocking on her door. “How’s Luke holding up?” Maria asked.

“He hasn’t come down yet.”

“Probably exhausted. He’s never slept before,” Maria said. “Think about all the things he’s never done! He’s never showered, never watched telly, never had pizza.” She shook her head. “It must be overwhelming.” She looked over her shoulder as her father peered out the door. “I have to go, but I wanted to check in. Tell Luke I said hi when I get back. I can come back this afternoon, right?”

“Please do,” Sarah Jane said. “I think Luke needs you as much as he needs me.”

Maria flashed a grin and ran back to her father, who bustled her into his car with a glance at Sarah Jane.

Sarah Jane went back to the breakfast table, and decided to go wake Luke.

She knocked on his door, but there was no response. She opened it slightly and peered in. Luke sat on the edge of the bed, his head cocked with interest toward her, still in his pajamas. “Hallo, Sarah Jane,” he said. “I wondered how long I was supposed to stay in bed. Can I get up now?”

Sarah Jane frowned at him. The bed was still made, and Luke was pale. He had hollows under his eyes. “Luke,” she said. “Did you sit like that all night?”

“Wasn’t that what I was supposed to do?”

Sarah Jane swallowed guiltily as she leaned back against the edge of the door. “No,” she said. “I didn’t explain properly. I think you should come upstairs with me. We need to teach you some things. I’ll let you get dressed.”

“Wait,” he said.

“What?”

“I’m very uncomfortable,” he said. “I’m leaking.” He indicated the front of his pajamas.

“That’s...” It hadn’t occurred to Sarah Jane that she would have to deal with toilet training. It was likely to be the fastest lesson in history, but she already vowed she’d never mention it to anyone, ever. Luke was too young to be embarrassed by it yet, but within a few weeks, at the rate he was going, he would be mortified. She couldn’t figure out how to explain it tactfully, so she went very clinical. She showed him into his bathroom and told him, in as bare and unvarnished a method as possible, exactly what the toilet was for. “And afterwards, you flush the toilet, like this,” she demonstrated, “and wash your hands in this sink. Like this.” She showed him how to use the soap. “You should use this place any time you feel you need to. Now, take those off and put on fresh
clothes,” she said. “Then meet me in the attic.”

Luke met her upstairs after a short interval. She went online, and did a quick search for videos. She gave Luke a dictionary to look at while she queued up a series of videos of daily life — a tasteful top-only depiction of a man showering, videos of people sitting down to eat, detailed lessons teaching children how to tie their shoes, how to tie a school tie, the proper way to brush teeth. She kept thinking of more and more basic things which Luke would never have done. Finally she took the dictionary away, and sat him down to study. As he watched the videos she went down and made him another breakfast, made fresh tea to replace the pot that had grown cold, and carried it up to him.

Luke was staring in fascination at a five year old as she tied her shoes. He had figured out the mouse and kept repeating the video over and over. “What is that?” he asked when Sarah Jane came in. “Is it like the dog?”

“No,” Sarah Jane said, and her heart hurt as she said it — she wasn’t sure why. “That’s a child.”

Luke cocked his head at the little girl. “It’s very small. What is a child?”

“It’s a human,” Sarah Jane said. “Like you and me, only very young. All humans start out small, and we grow.”

“I didn’t start out small,” he said, and Sarah Jane realized why her heart was hurting.

“No,” she said.

“Does that mean I’m not human?”

“No,” Sarah Jane said. “It means you’re a very special kind of human.” She reached out and touched his shoulder, and he turned to look at her hand. She felt awkward and pulled away.

Luke stared at where her hand had been for a moment, and then looked back at the video. He clicked forward for the next video in the queue. “Your hand is warm,” he said softly, and inspected the next video intently.

When he was done with his study of basic civilized human behavior, he had a lot of questions. Sarah Jane wasn’t able to answer most of them — a lot of them had to do with the why of things. She told him that many of his questions would answer themselves in time, and for the others, she wasn’t necessarily the best person to ask. She felt more and more guilty as the day went on. It was clear that he was exhausted, but she couldn’t seem to still the roaring curiosity that had taken over his mind. She felt woefully inadequate. It was a relief to Sarah Jane when Maria knocked on the door and Luke could transfer his questions to her.

Maria was completely unfazed by him. When he asked a question she couldn’t answer, she simply shrugged, without seeming to feel guilty for not knowing the answer. When he asked something awkward — something personal or sexual — she made a joke about how backward he was, or said, “Nevermind. You’ll learn sometime.”

Sarah Jane was exhausted herself. She hadn’t slept well, and Luke’s questions to Maria had made it clear there were a few things that Luke had to learn quickly. She queued up a few basic sex education videos, intended for young children, and after Maria had gone she made him watch them. After he’d seen them, he frowned for a long moment at the still screen. “So, I am male, and you and Maria are female,” he said.
“Yes.”

“And I am supposed to have sex with one of you?”

“No!” Sarah Jane blushed and turned his chair around. “I showed you that only so you wouldn’t need to ask questions about it,” she said. “You don’t need to worry about any of it. Not at your age.”

“But you are female. And the women are the mothers.”

“Yes.”

He frowned again. “I don’t have a mother.”

“Not in the way that video said,” she admitted. “But in a way, I’m trying to be your mother. According to those papers I drew up, I’ve adopted you. That makes you my son. Sort of.”

“Am I the only human adopted?”

“No,” Sarah Jane said. “Sometimes a mother can’t care for her baby, so she’ll give it to someone else to raise. That’s adoption.”

“But Maria has a mother, yes?”

“Yes,” Sarah Jane said.

“And you had a mother?”

Sarah Jane sighed and backed up until she sat on the edge of the sofa. “No,” she said. Then, “Yes. For a while.”

Luke cocked his head at her.

“I was a baby, a child,” Sarah Jane said. “And my mother and father died. I was adopted by my aunt Lavinia. An aunt is... a relative, I’ll explain that later.”

“So you were an adopted human, too?”

Sarah Jane smiled. “Yes,” she said.

“I guess, then, we have that in common.”

She was unexpectedly touched. “Yes.” The circles under Luke’s eyes had grown deeper, and Sarah Jane felt an surprisingly maternal concern. “You should go to bed,” she said. “You’re exhausted.”


“That’s because you didn’t sleep,” she said.

“What is sleep?”

Sarah Jane opened her mouth to explain the unexplainable, and then shook her head. “Go down and
get into your pajamas,” she said. “I’ll come tuck you in and explain.”

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Luke was sitting back on the edge of the bed again when she finally came in. “All right,” she said. She turned on the bedside lamp and turned off the overhead. In the dim light, she tried to give Luke a reassuring smile. “Stand up, and fold down the covers.”

“Covers of what?” Luke said, examining the chest of drawers.

“On the bed,” she said, demonstrating.

“Is this sleep?”

“No,” Sarah Jane said. “This is just how one goes to sleep.”

“Couldn’t you show me a video?”

“A video wouldn’t show you what’s really happening,” Sarah Jane said. “All right, you’re supposed to lie down. Sit on the bed. And then your head goes on the pillow, here.” Luke lay down with his eyes wide. Sarah Jane tucked his feet into the bed and pulled the covers up over his chest. “There. Is that comfortable?”

“I suppose,” Luke said. But he didn’t look comfortable. “There was something like this at the factory,” he said. “I got up from it, and ran. I had to run.”

“You were frightened,” Sarah Jane said. “But no one’s trying to hurt you here. Now just relax.”

“What does that mean?”

Sarah Jane realized this was going to take some time. She pulled the chair from the wall and sat down. “Close your eyes and think about your body. All your muscles, starting from your feet. Are any of them tense, or clenched?”

“Yes.”

“Try to let them release, relax. Now go up to your legs. Relax the muscles.” One leg shifted a bit as Luke released the tension. “Now your stomach muscles, and up your back. Relax your shoulders. Let your arms sink into the mattress. Make sure you’re not trying to hold your head up, just let the pillow support you.”

Luke took an instinctive deep breath, and let it out in a relieved sigh. A second later, he yawned, and his eyes shot back open. “What was that?”

“It’s called a yawn. It’s a reflex, it just means you’re ready to sleep. Relax.” Luke shifted back onto the mattress again. “Now, I’m going to turn off the light,” Sarah Jane said, and she flipped off the bedside lamp.

“Why?”

“It’s easier to sleep when it’s dark,” Sarah Jane said.
“But it’s harder to see.”

“That’s the point,” Sarah Jane said. “You’ll be asleep. So close your eyes.”


“Won’t that mean I’ll stop breathing?”

“No,” Sarah Jane said. “Your heart and your lungs and everything important keeps going on while you sleep. You’re just recharging your mind and body. Just rest. Breathe.... Breathe....”

She trailed off as Luke seemed to fade away into the darkness. For long moments, she waited, listening to his deep breathing. With a bit of a sigh of relief, Sarah Jane stood up and headed for the door.

“Sarah Jane!” Luke called out in the darkness.

She stopped. “What is it?”

“Something happened, my perception faded, I—”

“You’re just falling asleep,” Sarah Jane said.

“Do I have to?” Luke said. “I’d rather sit up and learn more.”

“You have to, Luke. Your body won’t function without sleep.”

“Oh,” Luke said. There was a long pause, and then he said, “It is frightening.”

“What?”

“You said frightened was what happened when knew I had to run? This is frightening.”

“Why?”

“The last time my perception faded, the Bane were killing me.”

Sarah Jane sat back down with a sympathetic sigh. She reached down and picked up his hand reassuringly. “That’s not what’s happening, now,” she said kindly. She couldn’t help but notice how very soft his hand was. Her thumb traveled over it, feeling the untouched newness of his skin. “Luke,” she whispered, sympathy and even pity flooding over her. “I wish I could make this easier for you. I know that everything is new and confusing, and you’re being dropped in the middle of being human without any preparation. Most human beings have years to develop and learn what you’re having to encompass in a single day.”

“A day and a half,” Luke said quietly.

“But think about what you’ve learned already,” Sarah Jane said. “You’ve learned to eat and drink. You’ve learned how to dress yourself. You’ve taught yourself to read. You know what a bathroom is for. You know what a child is, and where they come from. You know your name. You know how
“I know what a friend is,” Luke said. “Maria told me.”

“Yes,” Sarah Jane said. “You know you have friends. And you have me.”

“Because you adopted me.”

“Yes,” Sarah Jane whispered. “You know where home is,” she said. “And that’s something many people never find. I know this is new and strange for you, and it’s frightening. But you can learn this, too. You have to.”

“But I am frightened.” His hand closed tightly on hers, and she could feel him trembling.

“Just relax,” she said, pulling the chair up closer. “Let your perception fade. I’ll stay with you.”

Luke took another deep breath in the dark, and his hand relaxed in hers, but he didn’t let her go. Sarah Jane wished she knew any lullabies. She didn’t, but an old poem by Byron that she’d had to recite in school wandered into her head. She kept her voice as soft as eiderdown.

“Our life is twofold; Sleep hath its own world,
A boundary between the things misnamed
Death and existence: Sleep hath its own world,
And a wide realm of wild reality...”

She recited as much as she could remember, and then let her voice drift off. Luke’s hand was still in hers, but he had clearly succumbed to his exhaustion. She was pretty tired herself, but strangely, she was loath to release that soft, warm, newborn hand. The sound of his breathing, deep and even, relaxing, even comforting — though how she could have needed comforting, she had no idea.

Luke. Here, and asleep, in her house. He was... hers.

“Luke,” she breathed, and her mouth twitched up into a smile. She let her head rest on the back of the padded chair and felt his hand, soft and trusting, in her own.

When she opened her eyes, it was morning. Her back hurt and her arm was numb. Her hand had fallen from the bed in the night, but Luke was looking up at her with his deep, innocent eyes. “What do you say when you wake up, and are about to start again?” Luke asked her.

Sarah Jane stretched the kinks out of her back and smiled at him. “Good morning.”

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