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Vintage *Cherish*

The Daddy And The Baby Doctor

KRISTIN MORGAN

Kristin Morgan

The Daddy And The Baby Doctor

Содержание

The Daddy And The Baby Doctor	7
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	40

[Letter to Reader](#) [Title Page](#) [Acknowledgments](#) [About the Author](#) [Letter to Reader](#) [Chapter One](#) [Chapter Two](#) [Chapter Three](#) [Chapter Four](#) [Chapter Five](#) [Chapter Six](#) [Chapter Seven](#) [Chapter Eight](#) [Chapter Nine](#) [Epilogue](#) [Copyright](#)



Powerful, prominent, proud—the Oklahoma Wentworths' greatest fortune was family. So when they discovered that pregnant mom-to-be Sabrina Jensen was carrying the newest Wentworth heir—and had vanished without a trace—they vowed to...Follow That Baby!

Sam Arquette: Once, recon and freeze-dried meals comprised his day.

Now this ex-soldier was cooking, cleaning and caring for two little girls.

And his code of honor had him tracking a fallen buddy's runaway lady to the offices of a beguiling baby doctor....

Amanda Lucas: Babies were her greatest joy... and her greatest sadness. Because she could deliver countless cuddly

bundles, but she could never conceive.

And now a dedicated daddy was challenging her code of confidentiality—and chipping away at her guarded heart....

Jack Wentworth: The millionaire navy hero was presumed dead, but a diamond ring suggested the soldier stud had been thinking about marrying his mysterious sweetheart....

Sabrina Jensen: Amanda didn't know where her pregnant patient had gone, but the Wentworths' powerful clout yielded the next lead from a small-town sheriff....

Don't miss

THE SHERIFF AND THE IMPOSTOR BRIDE by Elizabeth Bevarly, next month's Follow That Baby title, available in Desire.

Dear Reader,

You'll find the heartwarming themes of love and family in our November Romance novels. First up, longtime reader favorite Arlene James portrays *A Bride To Honor* In this **VIRGIN BRIDES** title, a pretty party planner falls for a charming tycoon...whom another woman seeks to rope into a loveless marriage! But can honorable love prevail?

A little tyke takes a tumble, then awakes to ask a rough-hewn rancher, *Are You My Daddy?* So starts Leanna Wilson's poignant, emotional romance between a mom and a **FABULOUS FATHER** who "pretends" he's family. Karen Rose Smith finishes her enticing series **DO YOU TAKE THIS STRANGER?** with *Promises, Pumpkins and Prince Charming*. A wealthy bachelor lets a gun-shy single mom believe he's just a

regular guy. Will their fairy-tale romance survive the truth?

FOLLOW THAT BABY, Silhouette's exciting cross-line continuity series, comes to Romance this month with *The Daddy and the Baby Doctor* by star author Kristin Morgan. An ex-soldier single dad butts heads with a beautiful pediatrician over a missing patient. Temperatures rise, pulses race—could marriage be the cure? It's said that opposites attract, and when *The Cowboy and the Debutante* cozy up on a rustic ranch...well, you'll just have to read this *TWINS ON THE DOORSTEP* title by Stella Bagwell to find out! A hairdresser dreams of becoming a Lone Star Bride when a handsome stranger passes through town. Don't miss the finale of Linda Varner's *THREE WEDDINGS AND A FAMILY* miniseries!

Beloved authors Lindsay Longford, Sandra Steffen, Susan Meier and Carolyn Zane return to our lineup next month, and in the new year we launch our brand-new promotion, *FAMILY MATTERS*. So keep coming back to Romance!

Happy Thanksgiving!

Mary-Theresa Hussey

Senior Editor, Silhouette Romance

Please address questions and book requests to:

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The Daddy And The Baby Doctor

Kristin Morgan



www.millsandboon.co.uk

Special thanks and acknowledgment are given to Kristin Morgan for her contribution to the

Follow That Baby miniseries

KRISTIN MORGAN

lives in Lafayette, Louisiana, the very heart of Cajun country, where the French language of her ancestors is still spoken fluently by her parents and grandparents.

In addition to her writing, she enjoys cooking and preparing authentic Cajun foods for her family from recipes passed on to her through the generations. Her hobbies include reading—of course!—and flower gardening. She loves walking in the rain, newborn babies, all kinds of music, Christmas, chocolate

desserts and love stories with happy endings. A true romantic at heart, she believes all things are possible with love.

Dear Reader,

Being a Silhouette author means a lot to me. Silhouette has been a constant and steady support to me since they published my first novel in 1991. As a reader of romance novels, I love books about heroes and heroines who have strong emotional conflicts. As a Silhouette author, I enjoy writing stories about characters who steal my heart away in their struggle to find everlasting love.

When my agent called to say that Silhouette was inviting me to participate in a special cross-line series entitled FOLLOW THAT BABY, I was thrilled. This would be my first time to write for a special project that involved other Silhouette authors. As it turned out, it was a wonderful, fun experience.

Thanks, Silhouette, for everything.

And thanks to all my readers for your patronage.

I wish you all the romance your heart desires.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristin Morgan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, decorative initial 'K'.

Sam Arquette paused momentarily to study the engraved brass nameplate on the office door. It read, Amanda Lucas, M.D. Turning the knob, he stepped inside and in one swift glance saw that the waiting room was full.

Full of pregnant women.

Well, he had been halfway expecting as much. Amanda Lucas's reputation as one of the best OB-GYN specialists in Mason's Grove, Oklahoma, was almost godlike. If he had learned anything at all about her in the past few hours, it was that she was considered the town's baby doctor extraordinaire. But the truth of the matter was, he wasn't here to see Amanda Lucas because the good folks in Mason's Grove thought the world of her. He was here as a favor to a friend.

Once again, Sam made a quick scan around the small crowded room, only to discover that he had become the center of attention. That didn't bother him. Over the years he had found there were times when his six-foot-two-inch frame made him an imposing presence to others. And as luck would have it, it seemed, this was going to be one of those times.

A moment passed. Then another. Eventually, Sam got the feeling that it was more than just his stature that had made him the center of regard. Apparently, he had stepped into a world that didn't necessarily welcome strangers—particularly, he surmised, male strangers—and for just one fleeting moment, he wished that his two young daughters were with him, although he had no earthly idea what good they would have done him, except that

their being female might have somehow helped to improve his image.

And who said it was a man's world? he asked himself with a smirk.

But in spite of that wry observation, Sam felt a flush rise to his cheeks. As an ex-Navy SEABEE, he thought that he had been trained to handle any situation. But, apparently, not one where a roomful of pregnant women were scrutinizing him so warily. He felt like an alien. Like an invader of the worst kind.

Well, ex-c-u-s-e me, he thought to himself. But wasn't this a free country?

Damned right, it was.

And, frankly, he had fought more than his share of battles on foreign soil to help keep it that way. He had as much right as anyone to go anywhere he pleased.

Right?

Without a doubt.

So how, then, had he gotten himself into this...this impregnable situation, anyway?

Better yet, how could he get himself out?

Thanks a bunch, Josie, he told himself a moment later, mentally chastising his good friend, Josie Wentworth. If it hadn't been for the favor she'd asked of him, he would have been at home right this minute, doing chores around his small farm while enjoying the company of his two young children. It was his way of life these days, although sometimes the fact that it was still

surprised him.

In truth, he really didn't mind doing this favor for Josie. He wanted to help the Wentworths all he could. He and Jack Wentworth, Josie's older brother, had been the best of friends. Now Jack was dead, killed only recently while on an undercover mission for the government. It seemed impossible that it could be true, but it was. And now the Wentworths were looking for a young woman whom they believed was involved with Jack right before his death. But, according to Josie, the woman had literally disappeared. Luckily, Josie had come across a doctor's statement that suggested the woman might be living in Mason's Grove. And since he now lived in the small Oklahoma town, Josie had asked him to look into the matter for her.

Clearing his throat, Sam pushed aside the sad thought that his good friend Jack was dead and, like the disciplined soldier he still was, in spite of his retirement, he focused his full attention on accomplishing his mission.

Answers. He wanted answers. For Josie and her family. For Jack. And for himself, too.

Once again, Sam cautiously surveyed the crowded waiting room. From the looks of things he figured he had made a mistake in coming to Amanda Lucas's medical office without calling for an appointment first. But these days, when it came to matters of business, he was at the mercy of his next-door neighbor, Mrs. Cunningham, who was the only person in Mason's Grove he had gotten to know well enough to have baby-sit for him. That was,

when her back wasn't giving her trouble. For the most part, he spent his time being a full-time daddy to his girls. His world revolved around them. It was as simple as that.

And as complicated.

The problem was that he had been ill-prepared to assume the responsibility of being a single parent. At the time of his wife's death, he had known more about disarming a nuclear weapon than he had about the nutritional needs of his kids. He had come a long way in the past months. Suzy Homemaker, he was not. But he was getting there.

Still, despite the fact that he was settling down to a more normal way of life than he had ever dreamed possible for himself, all within a blink of an eye of Josie Wentworth's phone call, he had felt the same old familiar stirrings of excitement that used to accompany him on every SEABEE mission he had ever gone on. Some things, it seemed, never changed. He was about as far away from that world as he could possibly get, and yet, deep down inside, he really wasn't that far away at all. Nor would he ever be, he now realized. Once a soldier, always a soldier.

Not that he was expecting this favor he was doing for the Wentworths to be any kind of a challenge. Good grief, he had just come here to ask the good lady-doctor a few questions about one of her patients. Just how difficult could that be?

Squaring his shoulders, Sam started forward, his eyes fixed on the reception area located at the rear of the waiting room. It took him five long strides to reach the counter. In the meantime, he

couldn't help but notice that the decor in the room was leaning toward a very feminine influence. In fact, he was beginning to feel like a bull in a china cabinet. He was almost afraid to move, fearing he would disturb something. Sitting behind the receptionist's desk was an attractive young brunette. She held a pen in her left hand and was jotting something down on a tablet. Settling back on his heels, Sam took a deep breath and waited for her to finish her task.

Finally, she glanced up and greeted him with a smile. "Hi. Can I help you?"

Sam grinned. It was just as he had hoped. He was going to be in and out of this place in no time at all. Simple. Uncomplicated. Not even a hint of a challenge. In some ways, that was too bad. He had been hoping for a slight adrenaline rush, at least. Oh, well, maybe next time, he told himself. "Yes, as a matter of fact, you most certainly can. I'm here to see the doctor."

"Doc Lucas?" the receptionist replied, her eyes widening somewhat. "Uh...well...yes...Doc Lucas is in," she finally stammered. "But she's with a patient right now. Is this concerning your wife?"

"My wife?" Sam repeated, his eyebrows drawing together. It took him a moment to understand what she meant. Once he did, he deepened his frown. "No—actually, I'm here on business."

"Oh, I see," she replied hesitantly. Then she cocked her head to one side. "You know, don't you, that Doc Lucas is an OB-GYN physician? All of her patients are women."

“I’m quite aware of that fact,” Sam replied. “But, like I said, I’m here on business, not for medical advice. Tell me, how long will it be before I can see her?”

“Well, I don’t know. That depends,” the young woman said, glancing down at the appointment book in front of her. She ran her finger down a list of patients who apparently were already scheduled for that day. “Did you call earlier for an appointment, Mar....?”

Sam’s grin dissolved into nothing. “No, I didn’t. But, look, I’ll only take a moment of her time,” he said.

The receptionist began shaking her head slowly. “I’m sorry. But unless it’s an emergency, Doc Lucas sees all her patients by appointment only. Perhaps you could come back on Thursday afternoon. I’ve just had a cancellation.”

“I need to see her today,” Sam argued impatiently.

“I’m sorry,” the receptionist replied. “But unless you have an emergency, Dr. Lucas won’t see you without an appointment. I can write your name down for three o’clock Thursday afternoon. That’s the best I can offer you.”

Already, Sam was shaking his head. “You don’t understand,” he said. “My business with Dr. Lucas is extremely important. I must see her now—today.” He crossed his arms over his chest. “In fact, I’m not leaving here until I do.”

After giving him a thoughtful frown, the young receptionist once again glanced down to study the list of patients she had scheduled for that day. Finally, she gazed up at him and said,

“Okay, if it’s that urgent, I’ll see what I can do. What’s your name?”

“Sam Arquette,” he replied.

The young woman nodded. “Have a seat, Mr. Arquette. I’ll have to speak to Doc Lucas about you.” Then she turned and walked away.

Satisfied that he was finally getting somewhere—frankly, it was about time—Sam turned with the idea of taking a seat. But when he noticed that he was still the object of considerable attention—not to mention that since his arrival the delicate-looking chairs in the waiting room hadn’t grown any larger to accommodate his size—Sam decided to remain standing. Once again folding his arms across his chest, he waited for the young receptionist to return.

Within a couple of minutes, she was back. “This must be your lucky day, Mr. Arquette,” she announced. “Doc Lucas has agreed to see you. Follow me. I’ll take you to her office.”

Sam nodded and then fell right in step behind the young woman.

“Wait in here,” she said when they reached the end of a corridor. “Doc Lucas is still with a patient, but she’ll join you shortly.”

“Thanks,” he said.

“Yeah, well, maybe you shouldn’t thank me just yet,” the young receptionist replied.

“What do you mean?” Sam asked, a grin slipping up one side

of his face.

The young woman gave him a slight smile. “Well, for one thing, Doc Lucas isn’t in the best of moods today. At first, she looked aggravated when I told her about you. But then, it was as if something suddenly clicked and she changed her mind.”

“What’s so strange about that?”

“You don’t know Doc Lucas, do you?”

Sam shook his head.

“Well, she seldom, if ever, changes her mind about anything,” the receptionist said. “She runs a pretty tight ship and, for the most part, stays right on course, if you know what I mean. She’s just that kind of person.” With that, the young woman turned on her heel and returned to the reception area.

Sam thought he knew exactly what the receptionist meant. He had known women like that in the navy. Dr. Lucas was probably driven—focused—and totally predictable. She probably hated men and treated them like something to be conquered and then done away with. And she probably never allowed herself—or anyone else, for that matter—room for error. A regular drill sergeant. He hadn’t even met her yet, but already he thought he knew her.

Alone in Amanda Lucas’s office, Sam sat down to wait for his meeting with her. Minutes passed. Long, endless minutes. Finally, he picked up the only magazine he saw lying around and began reading an article on breast feeding. He figured that he might as well learn something while he waited.

Suddenly, from somewhere just behind him, he heard someone say, “Mr. Arquette, I presume.”

The voice was definitely female, but it was deep and sultry and immediately sent goose bumps down his spine. There was no doubt in his mind that, under just the right circumstances, a voice like that could have easily enthralled a man—in fact, encompass his whole being. But, of course, Sam reminded himself, this wasn’t the right circumstance.

Thank goodness.

Besides, even if it was, he wasn’t interested. He already had his hands full, raising his two young daughters. Frankly, when the need to burn off that kind of energy hit him, he went for a long, tiring jog. And, so far, so good. It worked.

Shaking himself free of those errant thoughts, Sam sat up straight and then turned in his seat to see a woman with shoulder-length brown hair standing just a few feet inside the doorway. She had a stethoscope around her neck, and she wore a long white lab coat over her street clothes. Sam knew without a doubt that he was looking at Amanda Lucas—in fact, somehow, he had known all along that it was her voice he had heard—and in spite of himself, his heart skipped a very, very necessary beat. To add to his surprise, she didn’t look at all as he had expected. She was... well...good-looking—especially for someone whom he had just recently pictured as a drill sergeant. She had clear blue eyes and a full mouth that, for the moment, at least, lacked the semblance of a smile.

But her voice... It was deep and throaty and incredibly sexy. Not just any woman deserved to have a voice like that.

Taking a deep, steady breath, Sam stood up and quickly offered her his hand. “And you must be Dr. Lucas,” he said evenly, in spite of all the weird thoughts running wild through his head. Get a grip, he told himself. He hadn’t thought—nor wanted to think—of a woman in quite this way since... well, since forever, it seemed. And, truthfully, he was shaken to the core.

Amanda Lucas was shaken, too. The tall, muscular man standing before her was extremely good-looking, and for some reason that bothered her. She folded her arms across her chest and peered down at the hand he was offering her. He had strong, capable-looking hands. Still, Amanda was contemplating whether or not to shake hands. So far her impression of Sam Arquette was that he was impulsive and arrogant. Not only that, but she was almost certain he was the same person who had been going around town earlier in the day, asking questions about her. Several of her patients had told her about him. But, finally, she resigned herself to the inevitable and slipped her hand into his, only to discover his palm was surprisingly warm for a man who was a snoop. Ending the handshake as quickly as possible, she straightened her shoulders. “My receptionist tells me that you practically insisted on seeing me this afternoon. I’m a very busy person, Mr. Arquette. I have patients waiting who need my attention. What, may I ask, is so urgent that you had to see me about it today?”

Silence followed. Clearly the man hadn't heard a word she'd uttered.

"Mr. Arquette," she said rather impatiently, once again folding her arms across her chest. She was ready to get this man out of her office. Something about him was making it difficult for her to breathe normally. Perhaps, it was because she had concluded that he was single. The look in his eyes was too aware—too aggressive—for those of a married man.

In any case, for some strange reason, her blood was pulsing through her veins at an exaggerated speed. She knew it was necessary to be firm with someone that aggressive. But every time she tried looking into his brown eyes for any length of time, she was mesmerized by their intensity. They were the color of deep, dark chocolate. "Mr. Arquette," she said again, adding a hint of frustration to her tone just to let him know she was growing impatient with him. "I'm waiting for your answer."

"Look, I need to ask you some questions about one of your patients," he finally said.

Amanda frowned. "Is that why you were snooping around town today, asking questions about me?" she demanded, her eyes never wavering from his.

"You know about that?" Sam asked, an incredulous look spreading across his face.

"Of course, I know," she replied with a smirk. "Mason's Grove is a small town, Mr. Arquette. News travels fast here."

He frowned. "What gave me away?"

Amanda almost laughed out loud on that one. Almost, but not quite. “Your looks,” she replied. Not to mention your arrogance, she thought to herself. “Someone told me that a tall, dark-haired man was snooping around town asking questions regarding my practice, and then a couple of hours later you show up here.”

“I can explain,” Sam said, moving a step closer to her.

He looked menacing in a sort of nonthreatening way. If that was possible. Still, she couldn’t be sure. She was determined to hold her ground.

“Good,” she said, unconsciously inspecting him from head to toe and, unfortunately, finding herself enthralled with the man she saw. She chose to ignore the way something had pulled deep and hard inside of her as her eyes had traveled up and down his muscular body. “Because I feel I’m owed an explanation.” Then she watched as Sam drew in a slow, deep breath.

“First off,” he began, “allow me to clear up something. I’m not some weirdo, if that’s what you’re thinking.” Amanda lifted her eyebrows in a way that suggested that was exactly what she was thinking. “And I wasn’t snooping,” he added gruffly—almost forcefully. “I was just trying to find out some information about you.”

Amanda couldn’t help herself. She wasn’t about to let this man off the hook that easily. After all, he was the one who had pushed his way into her office. She was aggravated now. She wanted answers. “Then why go to my friends and neighbors? Why not come straight to me?”

“Good point,” he replied evenly. “I’ll remember that next time.”

“Indeed,” she said, giving him a hard glare. Still, her heart was beating wildly. Too wildly. She dropped her eyes from his as soon as she could. Then, drawing in a deep breath, she walked right past him to her desk. “Let me explain something to you, Mr. Arquette,” she said, turning around to face him. “Any information I have concerning my patients is strictly confidential between them and me.”

“I understand how you must feel about that, but—”

“When it comes to matters of this nature, Mr. Arquette, there are no buts,” Amanda said, interrupting him. Frankly, she wanted to put an end to this conversation as soon as possible. She needed oxygen and there simply wasn’t enough in her office right now for the two of them. “Now, if you’ll excuse me, I’ve got a busy schedule. I’ll have my receptionist show you out.” With that, she headed straight past him for the door.

“Now wait a minute,” he said, suddenly reaching out to stop her. In truth, he wanted to stop her for more reasons than he cared to think about. In fact, he would have liked nothing better in that moment than to chisel away her icy persona. So he had gotten off to a wrong start with the woman. Did she have to be such an iceberg about it? Where was the compassion that all doctors, male or female, were supposed to have? He was used to tangling with international spies and war criminals. Surely he could handle one small-town female doctor. Of course, the protocol in dealing

with her as opposed to some war criminal was quite different. Right now, he was on his best behavior. While in the navy, not every situation required that of him.

“The least you can do is hear me out,” he said meaningfully.

Immediately, her eyes dropped to where he held her arm. “Obviously, you don’t understand, Mr. Arquette,” Amanda said. “It’s a matter of ethics. My patients trust me not to repeat our conversations.” She gazed up at him, her blue eyes sparkling with indignation. “Now, if you would be so kind as to let go of my arm.”

The sound of her voice swept through him like a warm, balmy breeze in springtime. Only it wasn’t springtime. It was November, and the winds outside were as chilly as the glare she was giving him. Frankly, he didn’t want to let her arm go. He wanted to pull her against him and kiss those pouty lips of hers. Then again, he was trying to be on his best behavior. Dammit.

“Sure thing, Doc,” he said, releasing her a moment later.

Taking a deep breath, Amanda turned immediately to leave the room.

“But you’re making a mistake,” Sam said in her wake, in a last-ditch effort to stop her without making a scene. He was experiencing an adrenaline rush, and he knew it had to do with her somehow. With the way she had turned her back on him. He wasn’t used to that kind of treatment. He was used to giving it. “It’s you, Doc, who doesn’t understand the seriousness of the situation. This could be a matter of life and death.”

A moment passed while Amanda paused in the doorway. Finally, she spun on her heels to face him, although her expression clearly stated that she was angry at herself for giving in. She gazed at him furiously. “Okay, Mr. Arquette. You’ve got my undivided attention. But this had better be damned good.”

Sam smirked. In spite of everything, he truly admired her spunk.

Not to mention the fact that he was in love with her voice.

He placed his hands on his hips. “Have you ever heard of the Wentworth family of Freemont Springs?” he asked.

Amanda Lucas narrowed her eyes. “Of course. Everyone in Oklahoma knows of them. Their contributions to local charities are legendary.”

“So, you’re aware of their reputation. Then you’re also aware that they’re good, honest people.”

“I know that they’re extremely generous with their money. But I don’t know any of them personally,” Amanda replied.

“Well, I do. They’re close friends of mine—in fact, I’m here on their behalf. They’re looking for someone. A woman by the name of Sabrina Jensen. They have reason to believe you know her. Do you?”

Of course, Amanda knew her. Sabrina Jensen was one of her OB patients. Only Sabrina had missed her last appointment and Amanda’s receptionist had been unable to reach the woman to reschedule. Amanda had thought that rather odd, and had even tried to follow up on it herself, but to no avail. Now, to have this

stranger asking questions about her...

“Why are the Wentworths looking for her?” Amanda asked evenly. The last thing she wanted was to give away the fact that she knew Sabrina as a patient. To her way of thinking, she saw nothing in Sam Arquette that made that information any of his business.

“Look, all I need to know is her whereabouts.”

Amanda frowned. “Is she in some kind of trouble?”

“To be honest with you,” Sam said, running his fingers through his hair, “the Wentworths don’t know. That’s why they’re trying to find her.”

“But I don’t understand,” Amanda said. “Why are they having such a problem finding her in the first place?”

Sam frowned to himself. He wasn’t accustomed to being questioned like this. As a soldier, he had been the interrogator. Now, suddenly, he found himself at the other end of the spectrum, and, frankly, it wasn’t any fun. In fact, his patience with the good doctor was wearing awfully thin. “It seems,” he said, “she’s disappeared.”

“I see. What do they think happened to her?” Amanda asked warily.

He shrugged. “That’s just it. They don’t know. But I can tell you this much—the Wentworths are truly concerned about her.”

“Well, I’m sorry, but I can’t help you with this matter.”

“You can’t—or you won’t?” Sam replied, gazing at her intently.

Amanda had turned to leave the room, but she stopped short. She'd had about all she was going to take from this...this imposing man. Just who did he think he was? Wasn't it enough that he had her guts all tied up in knots to the point where she doubted if they would ever relax again? "Look, Mr. Arquette," she said, giving him another one of her hard glares. "Even if I knew where the woman was—which I don't—but even if I did, I wouldn't tell you."

"So, in essence," Sam began cockily, "you would deliberately hide her whereabouts from me even if you knew them."

Determined to keep her cool, Amanda breathed deeply. "In essence, yes. Now, if you'll excuse me, Mr. Arquette, I have nothing more to say to you."

Frustrated that he wasn't getting anywhere with her, Sam felt his temper flare. More than anything in that moment he wanted to shake some sense into her. For heaven's sake, couldn't she see he was only trying to help out a friend?

Sexy voice or not, Amanda Lucas had pushed him just about as far as he wanted to go. Her icy manner was becoming nothing but a pain in the behind. Frankly, it stunk. She was an iceberg, all right, through and through. He had thought he could thaw her without much effort, but he had been wrong. No doubt, one glance from her could have sunk the Titanic. In fact, nothing in that moment—short of kissing her senseless—would have given him greater pleasure than to have found a way to melt her down to size. His size. And then maybe she wouldn't have been so sassy.

Except for her voice. Heaven help him, but he didn't want to change a thing about her voice. It was sexy and alluring and the only thing about her that sizzled hot. In many ways, it was more than enough. He was completely and utterly enthralled with it—with the woman he suspected was hiding somewhere in that deep freeze surrounding her. But, dammit, he hated having to admit it.

“Look,” he said. “The Wentworths are good people. I hope that once you think this over, you'll reconsider giving me the information they need.”

“I'm sorry, Mr. Arquette, but I won't be changing my mind. Now if you'll excuse me...”

Despite Amanda's best intentions to just turn and march away, she found herself practically standing toe-to-toe with the source of her irritation. The audacity of the man. Just who did he think he was, anyway, coming into her office like this and disrupting her day? Making her feel breathless. She wasn't obligated to help him, even though he seemed to think she was.

Actually, it didn't surprise her at all that she was already at odds with him. From the moment her eyes had locked with his, she had known that he was going to be trouble. Big-time trouble. The kind of trouble she had purposely avoided for years now. Handsome. Intelligent. Cocky. He had the makings of a good old-fashioned heartbreaker. Thanks, but no thanks. Once in a lifetime was more than plenty for her. She had a purpose in life now...a reason for being. She had her patients and they needed her. And she needed them. They were her joy, her life. Perhaps,

she would never totally come to terms with the way her life had turned out. Undoubtedly, she would never forget the hurt she had suffered at the hands of her ex-fiancé. But there were some things she simply had to accept.

Suddenly, Amanda realized what she was doing to herself and returned her attention to the present. “I have to get back to my patients now, Mr. Arquette. Good day.”

Then she made a mental note to look into the matter of Sabrina Jensen once again. If, indeed, Sabrina was hiding out, then she was probably alone and frightened. She might even be in need of food and medical attention. But no matter the difficulties Sabrina was having to endure, Amanda would have gladly traded places with her. It had to be a wonderful feeling to be carrying the baby of the man you loved. Unfortunately, she would never know.

Once again, Amanda turned to leave the room. Just as she did, she came face-to-face with her receptionist. The young woman looked frantic. “What is it, Kathy?” Amanda asked.

“Doc Lucas,” she said excitedly. “You’d better come quick. It’s Lucy Foreman. She says her baby is coming—and I think she’s right.”

“Is she on the phone?”

“No, she’s in the waiting room.”

Oh, good Lord, Amanda thought. Just what she needed right now. An emergency delivery—and at her office, no less.

She hurried down the hall toward the waiting room. “Is her

husband with her?"

"No," Kathy said, following alongside her. "She's alone."

"Great," Amanda muttered.

Stopping short, Amanda spun around and glared at Sam Arquette who had been following behind at a distance. "Don't leave just yet, Mr. Arquette," she said. "I may be needing your assistance. More than likely, someone is going to have to help me move my patient to an examining room."

"You're joking, right?" he replied, halting in his tracks to gape at her.

"No," Amanda said. "I'm afraid not."

Sam frowned. "I presume I have a choice in this matter."

"Of course," she answered, squaring her shoulders as if to say, if that was how he felt, she didn't really need him, after all.

But Sam figured it was costing her a lot to ask him for his help. If there was one thing he had already come to realize about Dr. Amanda Lucas, she wasn't a woman who liked having to depend on a man for anything. Well, hey, that wasn't his problem.

"Okay, Doc," he said. "I'm in."

In a heartbeat, Amanda turned and rushed down the hallway toward her patient.

As Sam followed at her heels, he couldn't help but wonder what he was getting himself into.

Chapter Two

Now that Amanda had a moment to think over what she had just done, she had no idea what had made her decide to get him

involved. Stupidity, she supposed. Initially, she had thought that, under the circumstances, Sam could have come in handy. But even if that did turn out to be the case, it didn't excuse the fact that he was arrogant and demanding, and that any woman with a lick of sense could have easily seen that about him, first and foremost, before noticing how handy he might have been. But was she looking at him with a lick of sense?

Uh-uh. Oh, no, not her. From the moment she had laid eyes on him, she had yet to use an ounce of her brain power.

Which told her one thing. She had better get a grip on herself—and quick. She didn't have time to be toying around with thoughts of Sam Arquette. At this very moment, she had an emergency on her hands.

Still, Amanda found that her heart was pounding like crazy at the idea that Sam Arquette was following close on her heels and that if she so much as paused, even for a second, he would be right on top of her.

Needless to say, she didn't pause, not even as she swung open the door leading from the back part of her office into the waiting room area. The last thing she wanted was to have Sam Arquette on top of her. In fact, the very thought of it left her feeling breathless.

“Has anyone called an ambulance?” she asked, taking in some badly needed air. She had several reasons for needing it. Of course, the number one reason was Sam Arquette himself. The man was...well...suffocating.

“No, not yet,” Kathy replied.

“Then do it,” Amanda ordered, hurrying forward.

Within a split second of scanning the entire waiting room, Amanda saw Lucy Foreman hunched over in a chair in one corner of the room. Crouched down at Lucy’s feet was Sheré, Amanda’s nurse. She was taking Lucy’s blood pressure.

Amanda hurried over, then bent down in front of her patient. “What’s going on, Lucy?” she asked, trying to evaluate the situation for herself. For the moment, at least, Sam Arquette was nowhere within her immediate thoughts. Still, her pulse was racing from the urgency of the moment—and, regardless of what else she told herself, from the fact that it was him, she knew, who was now standing right behind her, practically breathing down her neck. As a result, chills ran rabid down her spine.

But, regardless of her reaction to Sam Arquette, one thing was becoming perfectly clear to her.

Ready or not, there was a baby on the way, and it looked as though he or she wasn’t planning to wait around very much longer for the rest of the world to figure that out.

“It’s the baby, Dr. Lucas,” Lucy cried out.

“I know, Lucy,” Amanda said in a comforting voice. “But don’t worry. Everything is going to be okay. Where’s Tom?”

Tom was not only Lucy’s husband, but he was also supposed to be her coach during labor.

“At a cattle auction in Freemont Springs,” Lucy replied, tears brimming in her eyes.

Amanda stood and drew in a deep breath. Freemont Springs was almost two hours away from Mason's Grove. There was no way Tom Foreman could make it back to Mason's Grove in time to be at his wife's bedside for the birth of their first child. One thing about babies, they were notorious for ignoring the readiness of others and coming into this old world when they were good and ready.

And, without a doubt, Lucy's baby was ready.

"I can't do this without Tom," Lucy cried out.

"Of course, you can," Amanda said, giving her patient a warm, reassuring smile. In her experience as an OB doctor, it never failed that when a woman went into labor, the one person she wanted at her side was the man she loved. But sometimes that simply wasn't possible. She thought of Sabrina Jensen. If Mr. Arquette's story was true, the young waitress would have to deliver her baby into the world all alone. As a woman, Amanda allowed herself a moment to feel sad for Sabrina; however, as a physician, she knew she had to get a grip and focus on what was happening right now.

"I know you were counting on Tom being here with you," she said, gazing at Lucy, "but it doesn't look like that's going to happen. Just think about it, honey," she added, her whole manner growing serious, but confident. "You could do this all by yourself if you had to. But, of course, you don't have to. I'll be with you every step of the way."

After a moment's pause, Amanda's words seemed to sink in,

and Lucy nodded in agreement.

Assured in her ability to get her patient through her labor without the added guidance of a labor coach, Amanda moved quickly to get her office ready for the unexpected delivery. Still, she took a moment to give Lucy a reassuring hug.

Turning with the idea of giving her staff additional instructions on what to do next, Amanda was startled to find herself face-to-face with Sam Arquette.

Well, they weren't exactly face-to-face. It was more like face-to-chest. Her face. His chest. Her eye level was just below the base of his throat—in fact, right above the V opening of his sport shirt. Never in her life had she been so starkly aware of the dark, springy hair that grew on a man's chest. Not even in med school. He swallowed, and without much upward movement of her eyes, Amanda watched his Adam's apple bob up and down. Her breath lodged in her throat. The whole thing gave her the silliest feeling in the pit of her stomach. Then she lifted her eyes a few inches higher, and wham! They locked with his.

He grinned knowingly, as though somehow he knew about the silly feeling in the pit of her stomach and the breathlessness that was presently making her feel almost light-headed. "What do you want me to do?" he asked.

For some reason, that question was enough to suck out any air that was left in her lungs. If she ever decided to allow herself a naughty moment, there would have been plenty of things she would have liked to have seen him do. But, of course, she never

allowed herself such things.

“Uh...” she stammered, mentally shaking herself free of the unconscious hold he had on her. “I need to get Lucy Foreman to one of the examining rooms in the back. Can you help me?”

A cocky, lopsided grin slid up one side of Sam’s face. “I can do better than that,” he said, brushing past her and lifting Lucy into his arms. “I can get her there myself.”

In his sudden move to get to her patient, he had rubbed his arm across Amanda’s breasts. Without actually looking at her, he mumbled an apology.

“Uh—no problem,” Amanda answered.

But, of course, there was a problem.

A big problem.

Her nipples were squeezed tight. And the tingling sensation in the pit of her stomach persisted.

Amanda was rattled, no doubt about it. Still, she refused to accept what was happening to her. She had come too far from her past experience with men to allow some arrogant so-and-so to walk into her world and shake it up.

Taking a deep, steadying breath, Amanda straightened her shoulders. “Have you ever done this before, Mr. Arquette?” she asked, adding a slight edge to her voice. It was intentional, of course. She wanted to make sure that the distance she planned to keep from him was well-defined. She only hoped he had gotten her message.

Sam gave her the most incredulous-looking smile. “What—

carry a woman?”

Amanda felt a blush rise to her cheeks. She had no idea why she had asked him such a dumb question. Of course, a guy like him had carried a woman before. Plenty of times, no doubt. And straight up to bed, she was more than willing to bet. Nonetheless, determined now to see this moment through, she met his stare evenly. “I was referring to the fact that Lucy’s in labor,” she added for clarification.

The corners of Sam’s mouth twitched up. “Well, now that you mention it, I once came to the rescue of a pregnant woman.” He tightened his hold on Lucy. “But it’s a long story. We probably don’t have time for it right now.”

Lucy groaned.

Amanda felt another wave of heat rise to her face.

“N-no, of course not,” she finally stammered after coming to her senses. Still, she found herself intensely curious about his story—particularly about the pregnant woman. And though she usually minded her own business, she would have liked nothing better in that moment than to have heard its details. “Follow me,” she commanded instead.

“I want Tom with me,” Lucy wailed, wrapping her arms around Sam’s neck.

They reached the nearest examining room. “Place her in here,” Amanda said. Sam entered the room and gently laid Lucy down on the examining table that had been made ready for her just moments ago. Then he stepped back, clearly with the

intention of leaving the room.

Reaching out, Lucy grabbed hold of his arm. “Don’t leave me,” she cried. “Please...”

Startled, Sam gaped at her. Finally, he said, “I’m not what you need, Lucy. I’m not a doctor.”

“I don’t care,” she cried out. “Tom’s not here. Please don’t leave me.”

Sam glanced up, his startled gaze meeting Amanda’s. His eyes probed hers and he didn’t blink once during the following few seconds. But finally, unable to deal with the intensity of the moment, Amanda had to look away. Shrugging her shoulders, she said, “If Lucy wants you to stay, that’s fine with me.”

Looking completely bewildered, Sam shook his head from side to side. “Now wait a minute,” he said, his hands perched on his hips. “You’ve got the wrong guy here. That story I mentioned a moment ago had nothing whatsoever to do with delivering any baby. The woman just happened to be pregnant. Period. I don’t know the first thing about women having babies.”

Which was the truth, Sam realized. On both occasions when his girls had been born, he had been out of the country on a mission.

“It’s not all that difficult,” Amanda found herself saying. “All you have to do is tell her when to breathe and when to push.”

Once again, Sam’s eyes met Amanda’s. And, once again, the encounter did strange things to her. Things she would have preferred not to have to recognize. Suddenly, she felt hot all over.

“Is that all there is to it?” he asked.

“That’s it,” she replied breathlessly—and she was completely aggravated with herself for feeling that way.

But, in spite of everything, Amanda had a feeling that Sam Arquette was quite capable of filling in as Lucy’s labor coach. In fact, she had a feeling that he was quite capable of doing anything he put his mind to.

“Well, Mr. Arquette, you’re going to have to hurry and make up your mind on this one,” Amanda stated in no uncertain terms. “As you can see, there isn’t much time. Either you’re in or out. So what’s it going to be?”

It was going to have to be out, Sam told himself. This was one time he was in way over his head.

He sucked in a deep breath and tried to find the right words to explain his decision to the lady-doctor and her patient. Surely once he did, they would understand why he couldn’t be a part of this.

But then Lucy started moaning, again.

And then Sam remembered something.

Something very vital to his nature.

There was no way he could ever live with himself if he turned his back on a woman in need.

He simply wasn’t made that way.

Regardless of the circumstances.

Dammit.

He slipped off his bomber jacket and threw it in a far corner

of the room. Then he began rolling up the sleeves of his shirt. “Okay, tell me what I have to do,” he said, resigning himself to the inevitable.

Amanda was impressed, both with the man and his decision to stick by Lucy when it was obvious that wasn’t what he really wanted to do. “Stand at her head,” she instructed him. He quickly moved into that position. “Now,” she added, “when I give the word, lift her shoulders slightly off the table and instruct her to push hard. When she isn’t pushing, you want her breathing like this.” She demonstrated the technique. “Got it?”

“Got it,” he replied.

But it wasn’t long before Sam realized that he didn’t have it quite like he thought. Giving birth was a laborious job.

In fact, it was downright exhausting, and he was only the coach. Lucy had to do all the work. Poor woman. If she wasn’t pushing so hard that her face was turning as red as a beet, she was working hard at breathing correctly. Amanda Lucas was the coolest person there. She was in total control. Thank goodness, someone was, he thought.

But Amanda was anything but cool. As a doctor, she was in control of the situation. But as a woman, practically forced into the company of a man she found extremely attractive, she was on fire. Burning up. Nonetheless, this was her moment of glory—her reason for deciding to specialize in prenatal care and delivery. If she couldn’t have children of her own, she would help other women give birth. Somehow, even if it was vicariously, it helped

to ease the ache inside of her. Right now was a moment of joy...a moment of complete wonderment.

Amanda's heart began to pound. "It won't be long now, Lucy," she said. "The baby's crowning." Then, without actually glancing up at Sam, she added, "Are you all right?"

"Uh—yeah—sure," Sam replied. "Is the baby coming?"

"Uh-huh...a couple more minutes should do it," Amanda said.

"That's it?" he asked in awe.

Amanda gazed up at him momentarily. "You're doing fine, Mr. Arquette. Hang in there just a few minutes longer. A good way to stay focused is to think of this baby as your child being born."

"Is it a boy?" he said, grinning. "I always wanted a boy."

For some silly reason, Amanda's heart sank to the floor. "Then this should be easy for you."

"Not as easy as it looks for you."

"I've done this many times, Mr. Arquette," she reminded him.

At that moment, Lucy gave a loud moan.

Amanda drew in a deep breath. "Come on, Lucy," she said, turning her total concentration back to her patient. "Give me one more big, hard push, and I promise your baby will be born. Come on, you can do it."

"Yeah, Lucy, you can do it," Sam added enthusiastically.

A moment later, with a smile of pure contentment on her face, Amanda assisted as the baby slipped from Lucy's body and into Amanda's caring hands. Seconds later, the newborn was crying

on his own. “He’s beautiful, Lucy,” Amanda said.

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