



THE PANDA'S CHILD

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[STORY] [ARTWORK]

Otter-Barry BOOKS



To Sophie Wren and
all her beautiful family
and for Archie Truswell

chapter 1



She had only closed
her eyes for a moment,
lulled into sleep
by the warm sun,

but when she woke
her child was gone.



The villagers had all walked
out into the forest together.
She had fallen behind the others.
Tired, she had laid the child down
on a soft bed of leaves and
rested beside him.

Only a few days old,
such a beautiful boy.

The villagers searched,
for three long days.

They all knew there was no hope.
They told her he had been taken
by wolves, wild dogs, leopards,
or the spirits of the forest.

When they gave up and
went back to their daily
chores, she continued
the search alone,
wandering the forest,
singing soft lullabies,
hope fading with every hour,
sorrow settling on her soul.

And then she heard,
maybe a stir of the
wind in the leaves?

The call of a bird?

Every mother knows
the cry of her own child.



Again, soft on the wind.

Again.

Through a thicket
of flowers, a cave.

In the cave, warm,
alive, her child.

Seven days he
had been gone,
seven ***long*** days.

She gathered him
into her arms and
fed him with milk
that flowed at his
cry, and wept with
a strong, fierce joy.

From the back
of the cave,
in the dark,
she heard a sound.

Two bright eyes sparkled.

A she-bear
ambled out,
brushed gently
past her,
then into
the forest.



