

For the Love of Andrew

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WHEN HIS PARENTS DIED, the people in eight year old Andrew's Ethiopian village gave him some money to survive. He had wanted a new pair of pants but knew he should find a more profitable investment. So he decided on a pregnant goat. It would provide him with milk for his baby sister, Tsaynesh, and once born he could sell the baby goat for money to buy his pants. Through the dust of the African plains, Andrew worked his field with his sister strapped to his back, sowing their future in the grounds of the earth.

As he worked, a leopard ran past and imprisoned Andrew's goat in its muzzle. He watched as the leopard towed the goat up a tree. With the villain feasting above his head Andrew fell to the ground screaming, "My money! My money!"

Eventually, like many other orphans in the impoverished regions of Africa, Andrew and Tsaynesh found themselves in the care of an orphanage. There they waited for the next turns of fate. Would they find a family? Would they be able to stay together? What would be the next adventure in their young lives?

A world away, or maybe just half a world away, Steve and Michelle Gardner came across a photo of a young African boy holding onto his baby sister protectively, like a father. The age in his eyes touched them, the wornness that brings the eighty year old out in the eight year old. In just a photo they recognized their new son and daughter.

The children's adoption case was to go to court at the beginning of March and the Gardners were looking forward to bringing Andrew and Tsaynesh home in early May. But their plans came to a devastating halt before their dreams came to fruition. In February they received word that Tsaynesh had died in the orphanage due to what they were told was a congenital obstruction of the throat. Steve and Michelle were devastated by the news but their sorrow for Tsaynesh soon turned into concern for Andrew. The child he held with such protection was gone. They knew that even though they were not yet able to bring Andrew home, they still needed to be there for him. Steve boarded a plane to Ethiopia to comfort a son he had never met.

In one of Steve's discussions with Andrew, Andrew revealed to him that he would still very much like a little sister to take care of and there were plenty more children who needed homes. Steve and Michelle decided that they were still called to bring home two children, even if Tsaynesh was no longer one of



them. During his trip to the orphanage Steve met Dinah. Dinah was a ten month old baby girl who was developmentally delayed. When they brought her home with her new big brother Andrew, she could not roll over or sit up even when she was propped up. Michelle says that she was a very "floppy baby." She was also unable to vocalize.

After a time of so much loss and turmoil the newly expanded Gardner family experienced a turn of fate as explained by Michelle Gardner, "Once she (Dinah) came home to us, it was like watching baby development in fast forward. She came home in May and by June she was sitting up, by July she was crawling and by September she was walking. Once she started walking she started running and she hasn't stopped since. She also started vocalizing shortly after coming home and within a couple of months was saying a few words. Now she is 2 1/2 and quite honestly she is a very bright child. She talks in long sentences, she sings real songs, she knows some colors, etc. And she is BUSY all the time!" As for Andrew, he is a child that has lived many lives all in the time of youth. From a child born to parents in Ethiopia who loved him, to an orphan raising his sister, to a boy living a world far away from where he began, in a life he never knew existed. He is now a boy who reads books in the evenings to learn more English, a boy who doesn't like to make his own bed, a boy who finally got a nice pair of pants.

A very happy Andrew and Dinah after joining the Gardner family.