

Raised By Robots

By: Vera Crabtree

Sandra and Kenny were on their way home from the hospital, with a beautiful baby boy, Lucas, in the back seat. They arrived home, and carried Lucas up to what would be his bedroom. There laid a crib like no other.

Kenny had seen a commercial for this crib a few months into Sandra's pregnancy. It utilized recent technology that allowed the crib to take action when the baby was in distress. When the baby could not sleep, it would rock the crib back and forth and read them a bedtime story. If the baby cried in the middle of the night, it would swaddle them tighter and play a lullaby until they had drifted back to sleep. As first time parents, this form of assistance seemed particularly intriguing. Kenny had bought the crib right on the spot. Although Sandra was cautious of this form of intervention from something so rudimentary, she was on board to give it a go.

Hesitantly, Sandra placed Lucas in the crib, and stepped back a few paces to see what would happen. As Lucas saw his mother move further and further away, he became distressed, and had started to cry. Although Sandra had already begun walking towards her baby once again, the crib had already taken action. In a heartbeat, a mobile appeared above Lucas, and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" had begun playing in the background. Before Sandra had even made it back to Lucas, he was giggling, reaching for the mobile above him. Sandra looked towards Kenny, who was grinning. "I think that's our cue to get some rest," Kenny had whispered, already walking towards the door. Although Sandra was hesitant to leave her baby's side for the first time, the thought of sleep dragged her away as she headed to her bedroom. She looked back at him when she reached the door, but continued to walk away.

It was 3:00 in the morning when the crying started again. Sandra jolted awake, knowing her baby was hungry. As she rushed to put her slippers on and head to Lucas's bedroom, Kenny had woken too and was not far behind. But as the two new parents turned the corner to Lucas's room, they saw their baby with a bottle already in his mouth. The crib had taken care of the child while the parent's rushed to get there before waking their neighbors. "I'm already loving this crib," said Kenny, somewhat groggy due to his abrupt wake up. "I'm beginning to come around to it too," Sandra responded, "I wouldn't mind a good night's sleep every once in a while." The couple went back to bed, leaving Lucas to his bottle.

Sandra came into Lucas's room that morning to wake him and dress him. To her surprise, Lucas was already dressed and cleaned, ready to take on the day. Sandra yelled to Kenny, "Did you already take care of Lucas this morning?" Kenny turned the corner with a coffee in his hand and responded, "I thought you were going to, honey." "I thought so too," replied Sandra and Kenny saw his son fully dressed. "Wow, this crib really is incredible," Kenny exclaimed. The coffee was already starting to wake him up. "I don't remember reading this in the manual," commented Sandra, "but then again, that manual went in the trash weeks ago." Sandra shrugged it off and took her son from the crib for the day.

At about 1:00 in the afternoon, after Kenny had been playing peek-a-boo with Lucas, he started to cry. Kenny, panicked, picked Lucas up, and brought him to the kitchen to grab him some food. However, as Kenny began airplaning a spoonful of applesauce towards Lucas, he cried even louder. "Okay, guess you're not hungry," said Kenny, puzzled as to what could be the problem. He then grabbed a bottle and tried to give that to baby Lucas, still having little luck. Confused and frustrated, Kenny began looking for the baby book he had gotten from the library when he thought of an idea. Kenny took the still crying Lucas upstairs and placed him in the crib. As Kenny was stepping back, the crib took action. In what felt like a blink of an eye, the crib had changed Lucas's diaper and began rocking him back and forth. Instantly, the crying stopped. But, when Kenny grabbed Lucas from the crib to bring him back downstairs, Lucas's crying began again. Kenny dropped the crying baby back in the crib instantly. The crib then swaddled Lucas and his eyes got heavy. "Must be naptime," Kenny whispered to himself and he went back downstairs alone, leaving Lucas to his crib.

Sandra had woken from the nap she had taken, and walked downstairs to Kenny. When she saw him alone, she freaked out. "Kenny, where's our son? Did you lose him already?" She began pacing around the living room. "He's asleep sweetheart, I put him down for a nap," Kenny replied, still gazing at the lit up television. Relieved, Sandra sat next to her husband and glued her eyes to the screen as well.

Hours had passed before they got up to eat dinner. "Do you think we should check on Lucas? It's been a few hours," Sandra had asked Kenny as she pulled out plates and glasses. "I'm sure he's alright, babies cry when they need anything. If you can't hear him I'm sure he's

happy,” Kenny replied. Agreeing, Sandra did not go after her baby, but rather spent the night downstairs with her husband, eating dinner and hanging out. “Who knew being a parent would be so easy,” Kenny had remarked during their dinner.

As the couple began heading up for bed, they stopped by the nursery to check on their son. As they walked in, they saw the crib feeding Lucas some baby food. “Must have gotten hungry,” Kenny mumbled as he headed towards his bed. Sandra followed, looking back at her son as she headed to the door.

Sandra and Kenny made it through the entire night without hearing cries. When they had woken up, Sandra went to check on Lucas to make sure he was okay. As she entered his room, she saw her baby giggling and playing with a stuffed teddy bear Sandra had never seen before. He was dressed, bathed, fed, and changed, all before Sandra had touched him. She went to pick up her baby, but Lucas began to cry, trying to grab the teddy bear that had been left in the crib. Sandra then handed him the teddy bear and started walking downstairs, but baby Lucas continued to wail. Sandra tried playing with her son, singing to him, and swaddling him in his blanket, but nothing seemed to make him happy.

Finally, Kenny came downstairs to see what the commotion was about. Upon arriving at the scene, he saw his child screaming with tears streaming down his face and a panicking Sandra trying everything she could to make him happy. Calmly, Kenny took their child from Sandra and began taking him upstairs. Sandra followed to see what Kenny had in mind. As Kenny entered his child’s bedroom, he placed Lucas into his crib. Instantly, Lucas stopped crying and continued to play with his bear. “The crib didn’t even do anything that time,” Sandra said, confused and clearly overwhelmed. Without a word, Kenny walked Sandra to the door and the couple headed downstairs. Sandra watched Lucas playing as her husband led her to the stairs.

As the couple watched TV together, Sandra looked to her husband and said, “I don’t think I like that crib.” “Why, isn’t it wonderful? It’s making this whole parenting thing a heck of a lot easier,” Kenny replied, still watching the show they had on. “I just don’t feel like I’m as close to Lucas as I want to be,” Sandra said, clearly unhappy and distressed. After a lengthy discussion on the topic, Lucas responded, defeated, “Okay sweetheart, let’s get a new crib this afternoon.”

The couple got Lucas and placed him in the car seat, as they drove to the store. Unsurprisingly, Lucas cried the entire car ride. “Why don’t I stay in the car with Lucas, you go pick the crib you want,” Kenny had said as they pulled into the parking lot. Wanting to get away from the constant screaming, Sandra agreed. She returned to the car with the simplest crib they had in the store. It did not even connect to the WiFi. Kenny seemed disappointed with her decision, but chose not to say a word.

The entire car ride home consisted of crying and sobbing from the back seat. As Kenny brought the new crib upstairs, Sandra bounced Lucas and tried to calm him down. She had little success, and Lucas was still wailing as Kenny dragged the old crib outside. As he placed the crib at the curb, the screaming escalated. Sandra and Kenny walked inside, and brought their baby to his new crib, hoping that would stop the baby’s screams. It only made things worse. The baby got even louder as he was placed into his new crib, his sobs almost hysterical. The couple spent hours trying to calm their child, trying everything they had read in the parenting books, but nothing seemed to help.

As nightfall hit, and Lucas was continuing to cry, Sandra had accepted defeat. “Go get the other crib Kenny, I can’t do this anymore.” Kenny, who was happy to get away from the crying, even for a moment, headed towards the curb and went to bring the crib back inside. But as he reached the end of his driveway, he noticed the crib was gone. Someone else had taken it off their hands, likely tired of their crying baby as well.

Defeated, Kenny entered the house once again, greeted by the screaming of his child. He dragged his feet up the stairs. As Sandra saw him enter the nursery empty handed, she knew the crib had been taken. She sighed heavily and continued to try to care for her crying child. The crying echoed as the night went on, not even pausing for a breath.

After an entire night of no sleep and cries ringing in Kenny and Sandra’s ears, Kenny had grabbed his keys and left the house as soon as the stores opened once again. After about an hour of Sandra facing Lucas’s screams alone, she heard the door open. She looked outside of the baby’s room to see Kenny dragging a crib up the stairs. It looked just like the first one. Sandra said nothing. All she wanted was for the crying to stop. As soon as the crib was in Lucas’s line of

vision, his tears halted instantly. Sandra picked her son up and placed him in the new crib. The house was silent once again.

Defeated, the couple went to their bedroom to rest. Sandra did not look back at her child as she left the room. Neither Kenny nor Sandra changed their day-old clothes as they lifted their sheets and slid into bed. They had both fallen asleep instantly. There was not a single cry or yelp to wake the couple as they caught up on sleep following their restless night. But, off in the distance, you could hear a child's laughter echoing through the house, as "Rock-A-Bye Baby" was being played softly.