

Summary: Jesse volunteers to help with a fertility experiment.

Categories: [Diagnosis Murder](#) Characters: Delores Mitchell, Dr. Amanda Bentley-Livingston, Dr. Homer Penrose, Dr. Jack Stewart, Dr. Jesse Travis, Dr. Mark Sloan, Ensemble, Lieutenant Detective Steven Sloan, Norman Briggs, Original Character(s), Stephanie March Sloan

Genres: Slash

Warnings: Brain-Insane, Character Death, Dark Themes, Experimentation, Forced Abortion, Human Experimentation, m/m, Scientific Conception

Challenges: None

Series: None

Chapters: 7 Completed: Yes Word count: 13772 Read: 8 Published: 12/16/2017 Updated: 12/16/2017

Story Notes:

The author's final story.

1. [Chapter 1](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

2. [Chapter 2](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

3. [Chapter 3](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

4. [Chapter 4](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

5. [Chapter 5](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

6. [Chapter 6](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

7. [Chapter 7](#) by Sarah Saint Ives

Chapter 1 by Sarah Saint Ives

Monday, June. 4, 2001

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The unidentified body had been found behind a dumpster four blocks from Community General Hospital. Dr. Amanda Bentley spoke into her recorder as she performed the autopsy. "Female, Caucasian, age approximately twenty three, five feet one, a hundred pounds, multiple contusions to the pelvic area, evidence of a recent miscarriage or abortion." Her latex glove touched the right ankle. "Strap marks on both legs, indicating she was restrained, which means the child was probably aborted. If I'm right, I'll find a needle mark on her lower back..." Rolling the body on its side, she found the mark. "There it is. She had a spinal block, which is why the ankles were strapped. A spinal block causes temporary paralysis to the lower body. Knowing others would listen to the tape, she explained, "A spinal leaves the pelvis and legs completely numb for several hours, which would eliminate the need for an anesthesiologist. This is indicative of an illegal abortion, like the ones that were performed in underground clinics when abortions were against the law. But they're not any more, so this doesn't make sense.

The laboratory results were still pending. Whether it was murder or accidental death was a mystery, but this was the second young woman in the past week who had been brought to her with the same symptoms. Both women were white, blonde, fair-skinned, very pretty, petite and had recently undergone abortion procedures. It was puzzling. As her lovely brow drew in thought, the phone took her away from the victim. She went to answer it, happy to hear her young son's voice. "Hi, Mom! Can I go to the park with Josh and his mom? I won't be bad, I promise!"

"Sure, CJ, just let me talk to Josh's mom first, okay? Is she there?"

Her son was the bright spot in her life--in fact, she couldn't imagine life without him. In her work as chief medical examiner at Community General Hospital, she had found herself caught up in

more than a few horrifying murder cases and countless needless deaths. She shielded her son from as much of the gore as possible, and took comfort in his company when she finally made it home each day.

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"He's a brilliant doctor." Dr. Mark Sloan was saying as Steve entered the office. "His work with invitro fertilization is incredible. He's helped a lot of childless couples conceive and deliver normal, healthy babies."

"So, what do you think? Should I go through with it? Dr. Jesse Travis asked. The younger doctor looked up to Mark as a mentor, even as a father figure.

"That's up to you, Jesse. It's your body."

Steve glanced curiously at his father, then his best friend. "What's up?" he asked. "What about his body? You thinking about giving someone a kidney, Jess?"

Jesse looked down, then met his eyes a little shyly. Steve mused that it was an engaging flaw in his character to be occasionally reticent. Although Jesse Travis was gifted with an impressive IQ and an insatiable curiosity, he was laden with personal insecurities, which, to Steve, made him even more adorable. "Dr. Homer Penrose. He asked me to be a guinea pig for an experiment."

"Well, tell me about it." Steve said. "Judging by the looks on both your faces, if you asked me right now, I'd say the answer is not just 'no', but \*hell\*, no! What does he want to do to you?"

There was a long pause, then Jesse said, "Make me pregnant."

Steve stared at him, trying to keep a straight face. "Jesse, I don't know how to break this to you, but..."

"No, really, he can do it! You remember that movie back in the early nineties, 'Junior', with Arnold-what's-his-name, you know, the big guy? Well, the script for that movie was inspired by Penrose's studies! According to Dr. Penrose, it really is possible for a man to carry a child to term. He's been studying this for twenty years and he picked me to be his very first actual human experiment!"

Steve sat down on the corner of the desk, frowning. "Why did he pick you, Jesse?"

Jesse shrugged one shoulder in humiliation. "I dunno."

"Maybe you should ask."

"He used the term 'pioneer in science'."

"You're doing it for the glory? So you'll get your name in a textbook?"

Mark intervened before feelings got hurt. "I think he's doing it because, like everyone else who has ever studied science, it's a revolutionary learning experience."

Steve scowled at his father. "Would you have allowed \*your\* body to be used for this?"

"Well, no. Steve, I'm in my seventies!"

"Would you have done it forty years ago?"

Mark was subdued. "No," he answered. "I had a wife and children."

Steve reached to pat his back. "I'm glad we were more important to you than science." His eyes moved to the young doctor. "Are you sure about this, Jess?"

"I want to do it." Jesse's voice trembled.

"Penrose swears it can be done safely and he's willing to prove it with Jesse's cooperation." Mark confirmed.

"Okay, I'll take your word for it." Steve was a Los Angeles police detective who had been assured a July promotion from lieutenant to captain. Very good at his job, he had a natural inclination for not believing everything he heard. "But then what? You carry a child nine months, then how does it get born? You don't have the right organs...the right \*birthing orifice\* to..."

"Cesarean section, of course." Mark supplied. "One out of ten women can't give birth naturally. It's not an uncommon surgery. I don't see any reason why it wouldn't be successful."

"So you're encouraging him."

"I'm not \*discouraging\* him. It's his choice." Mark's tone bordered on indignant.

Steve knew not to provoke his father's sense of morality. "So Jesse's going to be the mother."

"Yes, in a manner of speaking. He seems willing to contribute nine months of his life to science."

"Nine months." Steve drummed his fingers on the desktop. "What about the kid?"

Jesse looked down at his trembling hands. "I take it you don't approve of me doing this."

"Jesse! If you have a baby, what about \*it\*? Diapers, bottles, two-AM feedings, terrible twos, school, school and more school, teen-age years..."

Jesse's lower lip quavered. "I \*hope\* I'll get to keep it."

"If you're serious about this, I hope so, too. I hope you wouldn't carry a baby nine months and then give it away." Steve said.

"No, I couldn't."

"So, if you're the mother, who's the father gonna be?"

Jesse blushed. "The embryo will be from donors, I suppose."

"\*You\* can't have a sperm cell in there somewhere? You \*are\* going to be the mother, right? Doesn't Penrose realize how smart you are? That Jesse Travis genius wouldn't be a bad gene to hand down if you're really going to go through with this."

Jesse nodded, thinking.

"We're just on our way to see him now." Mark said, looking at his watch. "Do you want to go with us, son?"

Steve nodded. "I think that might be a good idea. I've got a question or two for him."

"Steve, Dr. Penrose is an absolutely brilliant scientist. He's figured out things about fertility that

most doctors are still drawing sketches of as vague possibilities. A lot of his patients swear he's got a 'magic' touch."

"Well, his touch had \*better\* be magic if he's going to lay one hand on Jesse." Steve muttered.

The quiet statement got Jesse's attention. Studying his tall friend as they walked together along the hospital halls, he said, "Thanks for caring, Steve."

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Dr. Penrose looked to be in his mid-forties, very tall and handsome. His eyes were piercing blue, his body was muscular. Steve had heard unfavorable gossip about him on countless occasions, but knew him only well enough to know he was contemptuous and far too vain. In his opinion, the man may well have been a genius who had made remarkable scientific discoveries, but his eccentricities and hostile attitude seemed somehow to cancel out the good points.

Steve sat down to listen as the doctor began explaining his experimental procedure to his potential subject. Jesse and Mark sat listening, raptly attentive.

"The zygote will be introduced into a synthetic womb and implanted into your body." Penrose said, showing them an illustration on a chart. He pointed to the drawing and went on as if giving a lecture. "The womb is made of flexible, expandable plastic and will produce ambient, oxygenated fluid exactly as if natural reproduction had occurred. A few minor alterations will be made inside your body during the implantation so the baby will be supplied the proper nutrients from you. Essentially, your plastic womb will function as if you were born with one. The baby can grow to full term inside you. We'll keep a very close watch on you during the gestation period, examinations every two weeks, and when it's ready, I'll perform the surgery to take out the womb complete with baby and restore your body to its present form."

"What kind of alterations are you talking about?" Jesse asked.

"Very minor ones."

"He would like an answer to the question, Penrose." Steve said, not so nicely.

Penrose was irked by the policeman's presence. "He will be unable to perform sexually with a woman during the pregnancy." he directed the statement at Steve. "It's necessary for the sake of the baby."

Steve waited for Jesse's reaction and was annoyed that it was nothing more than a brief twitch of the lips.

Jesse glanced at Steve and remembered his most important question. "What happens after the baby's born?"

"I'll reattach your male elements and you'll heal. I can't foresee any problems. You will have proven to science that a man can carry a child to term and you won't be any worse for wear."

"But...do I get to keep the baby?"

Penrose shrugged as if it were an insignificant detail. "We'll figure out what to do with the baby when it's born."

Jesse fidgeted in discomfort. "No."

Stern eyes turned on him. "You've changed your mind about doing this for me?"

"No, I just want to keep the baby. Otherwise, I don't want to do it."

"I see." Penrose gave him an icy glare. "Any other stipulations, Jesse?"

Steve hated the way the man vocalized his friend's name. He gritted his teeth to hold his tongue.

"I just want to know who is going to donate the egg and sperm." Jesse said.

"I've taken the liberty of preparing zygotes. They're already at twelve weeks in an artificial womb in my laboratory."

Jesse was aghast. "Three months along already without a human host? How many do you have?"

"Four at this time, but we'll only need one in this project. The others can be used in surrogate females. The eggs were donated by two of my most beautiful, intelligent medical students. Blue eyes, blonde hair, all the choicest Caucasian traits. I'm the sperm donor."

"I'm not responding to the 'Hitler' ideals there," Steve said coldly, unable to contain his criticism any longer. "But what this boils down to is that you plan to make Jesse have *your* baby."

"My offspring will have superior genes. The child will be intelligent, talented and good looking, and even if you think it's 'Hitlerish', Lieutenant, yes, it will be born with blonde hair, blue eyes, emotionally, mentally and physically superior."

"Well, one thing about him." Steve said, rolling his eyes toward Mark. "He's not lacking in self-confidence."

Ignoring him, Penrose turned to Jesse. "If you intend to keep the child, you'll be taking on a huge responsibility. You're single, aren't you? Do you realize how much trouble children can be, especially children of superior intelligence?"

"Oh, yes. I've taken care of kids before." Jesse said, unfazed by the man's arrogance.

"And you believe you're ready for that kind of commitment?"

"If I have the baby, I want to keep it. Yes."

"Well, it'll be your choice, but I do not recommend it." Penrose turned away from him. "So, are you still interested in the experiment?"

Jesse took a long breath, searched Mark's pensive face, then Steve's forbidding eyes for an answer. He sighed and spoke to the tall doctor's back. "Yes. I want to do it."

Steve groaned, got up and walked out the door.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 2 by Sarah Saint Ives

Thursday, July 5, 2001

Sipping coffee in the cafeteria, Mark Sloan was hunched over a newspaper when Steve plopped down in a chair beside him. "Hi, Dad. Sure is a hot day."

"Oh, hi, Steve. Is everything okay?" Mark asked. He peered over the top of his eyeglasses, taking note that his handsome son was dressed in full police regalia, complete with many medals in a straight line across the upper left side of his chest, a new captain's rank emblem pinned to the

collar. The hat was tucked beneath his arm in compliance with military/constabulary regulations. Every soldier knew the rule from boot camp and every cop from academy training, and Steve had excelled in both worlds. \*Hats are to be removed when entering any building.\*

“You got your promotion! Oh, Steve, I’m so proud of you!” Mark reached to hug him, careful not to wrinkle the jacket. “I wish I could have been there!”

Steve’s arms closed around the older man. “Thanks, Dad. Me, too. It got a little hot because they insisted on an official ceremony outside on the podium. Fifteen awards and three promotions. This monkey suit got a little warm.”

As Mark pulled back, his trained eyes scanned his son’s face. He wrinkled his nose at the exhale of breath. “Did you have something to drink?”

“I had a couple.” Steve said. “Even better, I got an extra little reward for being promoted to captain! I’m off for a four-day weekend! I plan to spend most of my time sleeping.”

“A four-day weekend! Wow! That doesn’t happen very often.”

“No, it sure doesn’t.” Steve released him and glanced around. “Where’s Jesse?”

“He’s in the doctor’s lounge taking a nap. He’s been feeling pretty rough.”

“Morning sickness?” It still sounded absurd.

“Yes, and noon, and evening, and all night. He can’t hold anything down for more than a few minutes.”

“Poor Jesse.” Steve sighed. “When is \*his\* day off?”

“He’s got today off, and the weekend, too, ordered by me! In fact, if you want to…”

“I could take him home with me and take care of him?”

“That’s a good idea, Steve. Maybe you could get him to drink some milk or juice. The two of you could watch a movie or go for a walk on the beach. What do you think? He could really use a friend right now.”

“I think that’s a great idea. I’ll go get him.” Steve got up and walked toward the door.

“Steve…”

The tall detective turned to face his father. “Don’t criticize him for doing this.”

“I won’t, Dad.” Saluting him, Steve went out the door.

Amanda slid into the chair next to Mark as the captain left. “My, he looks handsome.” she commented.

“Yes, he does.” Mark agreed, smiling graciously after him. “\*Very\* handsome.”

Even with the age difference, she could relate. She was her own young son’s greatest fan. “I got the DNA results on those two abortion murder cases from June and I received confirmation on the girls’ identities. Their names were Shelly King and Maria Robinson. Mark, they were both pregnant by the same man.”

She paused to let her words take effect, and when she saw the interest in her friend's eyes, she went on. "They were both approximately three months pregnant. Both did volunteer work for a local 'Pro Life' organization, which has to do with the Catholic church! They were from very devout families. Mark, have you ever met a good Catholic girl who would have an illegal abortion?"

"No..." he answered, deep in thought. "No, I haven't. Especially not when they're pro-life activists."

"Exactly." She gave him a triumphant nod. "So, what do you make of all this?"

"I'm afraid to say it out loud." he said grimly.

"You're not going to say anything to Steve?"

"Amanda, in all my years as a doctor and as a police observer, I've never deliberately withheld evidence that could lead to the arrest and conviction of a murderer. Do you think I'm going to start now?"

"The situation is all different now. I know what you're thinking, and I agree with you. Jesse is fragile enough right now without adding this little piece of horror to his misery. The only doctor who knows how to reverse the operation to restore his body to right after the baby is born is Penrose. If you blow the whistle on him before then, Jesse could permanently lose his masculinity, maybe even his life. Mark, I don't want to lose him."

"I know, Amanda. Jesse's like my own son. All this evidence sure makes Penrose look guilty, doesn't it?" Mark sighed loudly. "What to do, what to do..."

"We keep our mouths shut." she advised.

He closed his eyes and nodded. "You're right. But only until after the baby is born."

"Mark, we're withholding evidence, which is punishable by up to five years in prison."

"Yeah." he said, the grimness returning. "I know."

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Steve found Jesse sleeping on a leather settee in the doctor's lounge and stooped beside him. Brushing his cheek with his fingertips, he murmured, "Hey, sleepyhead."

Jesse stirred reluctantly, then opened one eye to look at him. He smiled, his ever-effervescent voice strained by a wide yawn. "Hi, Steve. You look good! Love the uniform!"

"Thanks. You ready to go home?"

"No, that's okay. I'm comfortable right here." Jesse curled up with the obvious intentions of going back to sleep, but Steve took him by the arms and pulled him to his feet. The young doctor looked up at his friend in surprise.

"I'm taking you home." Steve said firmly. Noting he was in his scrubs, he led him toward the door. "Where are your clothes?"

"In my locker." Jesse smothered a second yawn before he resorted to whining. "Steve, why do I have to go home? I'm happy here."

"We're going to \*my\* home, not yours. Don't worry, Jess, I'm not going to leave you alone."

"Oh. Okay." Jesse looked relieved and embarrassed at the same time. "I'll go get my stuff."

"I'll come with you." Steve said, and followed him to locker room.

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Thirty minutes later, they pulled into the driveway of the beach house Steve shared with his father. As they entered the house, Jesse, deathly pale, bolted for the bathroom. Steve winced at the sounds of retching. He moved to the bathroom door, which was ajar, and peeped in as his friend washed his face in the basin. "So, you still think this being pregnant thing is a nifty idea?" he asked.

"No! I hate being sick." Jesse answered.

"I wish you would have thought about it a little longer before you agreed to do it." Steve said, carefully rubbing his back.

"Please don't say 'I told you so'." Jesse rinsed out his mouth, then grabbed the basin. "Can I lie down? I'm so dizzy."

Steve put an arm around him for support and led him back to the living room. Putting him on the couch, he perched on the edge and studied his face. "You don't look good at all."

"Gee, thanks, Steve."

"You want something to drink?"

"If you give me something to drink, you'd better have a bucket ready. That's the way it works. Until this trimester is over, that's what I have to look forward to."

"You have to drink or you'll dehydrate. Water is good for you, but milk would be better. You need the nutrition."

"No, I think the \*baby\* needs the nutrition."

"So do you. Jesse, you're a doctor. You know I'm right." Steve said. "But I'll give you some slack. You're sleepy, so take a nap, okay?" He ran concerned fingers through his friend's thick blonde hair. "Go to sleep."

Jesse closed his eyes. "Okay, thanks. G'night." He reached for Steve's hand and held it as he assumed a more restful pose. "Sleepy."

Steve did not pull his hand away. He remained there, holding the soft, talented hand until his pregnant male friend had fallen asleep.

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Mark's arrival was what brought him to his feet. Steve cautioned him to be quiet, gesturing toward their slumbering guest. The two Sloans tiptoed into the kitchen to talk.

"I see you're still in dress uniform. You haven't had a chance to change, yet?"

"I was holding Jesse's hand." Steve answered, knowing he would take it metaphorically.



“He sure needs that right now. You’re a good man, son.”

“He was already thin, Dad--now you can count every rib through his shirt! He’s throwing up, he’s probably dehydrated, he’s pale as a ghost and he’s \*pregnant\*! How much longer is this going to go on?”

“Usually lasts about nine months, Steve.”

“Very funny. I mean the sickness.”

“The nausea could end in a month, but then again, it may not. Your mother was sick the entire nine months she was pregnant with you. Technically, because Jesse’s fetus was at twelve weeks before it was implanted, it’s in the second trimester, but Jesse has only carried it for a month, so his body is still reacting as if it were an early pregnancy.”

Steve leaned against the counter and gazed off into the mid-distance. “You know, Dad, I’ve been thinking a lot about kids.”

“\*You\*, Steve? You want kids?”

“I love kids. I always have. It would be great to have a little one around, don’t you think?”

“Yeah, it would. I think if Jesse’s baby is around us a lot, he or she is going to be one \*very\* spoiled child.”

“Yeah, what’s wrong with that? Nothing wrong with a little spoiling, is there?” Steve grinned at him.

“Of course not. Spoiling is mandatory.” Mark assured him. “Steve, do you think we could talk him into moving in here with us?”

“Would you mind?”

“Not at all, but you need to be very careful how you handle this situation.” Mark warned. “He’s fragile now. I’ve even seen him get teary a couple of times. It’s not pretty.”

“He needs us now.”

“Yes, but you have to be careful what you say to him. Sometimes, pregnant women go through a phase of hormonal imbalance that throws their emotions to extremes. They’re either crying or they’re jubilant. Your mom called it a ‘rollercoaster’. I don’t know what it’ll do to Jesse, yet, but I’m sure he’ll be no different. Just be ready if he takes things wrong.”

“What could he possibly take wrong?”

“I don’t know. It’s impossible to predict ‘gestational paranoia’. He might think we’re trying to take the baby away from him if we ask him to move in with us.”

“He couldn’t be that pathetic! Dad, he’s a grown-up! I know he doesn’t always \*act\* like one, but he’s got good sense!”

“You can’t always count on that.”

Steve shrugged in surrender. “Okay. I’ll be careful what I say.”

“If he says something unreasonable, try to keep in mind what I just told you.”

“Okay.”

“Believe me, Steve. I’ve been through it all. Your mom was a bear when she was pregnant. I couldn’t open my mouth without her either crying or throwing things at me! Those were the absolute worst eighteen months of my life!”

“I’m sorry, Dad. I didn’t know Carol and I had such an adverse effect on Mom.”

“And me!” Mark laughed affectionately and patted his shoulder. “Believe me, you were worth it.”

“I hope.”

“You know I love you, Steve.”

“I love you, too, Dad.”

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Friday, July 6, 2001

As Jesse came from the bathroom, still weak from a case of the dry heaves, Mark guided him to the dining room table. “Time for breakfast, young man.” he said firmly.

“I can’t eat, Mark.” Jesse protested. “It’ll come right back up. You obviously don’t know how sick I am!”

“You can’t stop eating just because you have morning sickness.” Mark pushed him into a chair and set a bowl, a box of cereal and milk in front of him. “Rice Crispies are great for the first trimester.”

Jesse groaned, but poured the cereal.

Steve entered the house from the deck, his hair windblown, his shirt unbuttoned. “Jesse, you should bring your breakfast out here. It’s a beautiful day.”

Mark smiled conspiratorially at his son. “That’s a great idea!”

Having poured milk over his crackling cereal, Jesse stumbled toward the sliding glass doors to join Steve on the deck. “It’ll probably be easier to clean up puke off the deck, anyway.” he muttered.

Mark slid the door closed and left them alone on the deck.

“Where’s he going? I thought he would join us.” Jesse said as he sat down. He dipped a bug from his cereal and pitched it into the nearby bushes.

“He’s going to work. He had breakfast an hour ago.” Steve scooted his chair closer to his friend’s in preparation for their discussion. He watched Jesse take a bite before he began. “Dad and I were talking this morning, and we both think it would be a good idea for you to move in here with us until after the baby is born.”

Jesse’s blue eyes rose to meet his gaze. “Move in here? You mean, like \*live\* here? What about my apartment?”

“That’s up to you, but since you’re renting, it’s not such a problem, is it? We’ve got plenty of room

for all your stuff, and if you choose to stay after the baby is born, there'll be room for him...or her, too. It's a big house."

Suspicion narrowed the doctor's eyes for an instant, then a glint of tears made him look down. "Thank you for your concern, Steve, but no thank you. I'm fine on my own."

"Jesse, you can't dismiss the idea without at least some consideration! Dad and I care about you! We want to be here for you!"

"Steve, I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself. But I'm grateful that you care about me. That means a lot to me."

"Jesse..."

Jesse took another bite, shaking his head. "No." he said with his mouth full.

"Will you at least think about it?"

Jesse put down his spoon. "I'll think about it." he answered. "And I'll tell you no again later. Why would you want \*me\* to move in here with you? It doesn't make sense, Steve! I'm not part of your family. I'm just a friend, an employee, a partner in BBQ Bobs! Your lives would be overrun by me and my problems, and pretty soon you would be sorry you asked me to move in! So the answer is no, but thank you very much for asking. I appreciate your thoughtfulness."

"Jess, you \*are\* family! Think about this, okay?"

"No." Jesse persisted. Seeing the cop's crestfallen face, he patted his arm. "Please, I don't want to talk about it any more."

Frustrated, Steve smacked the tabletop. "Damn it, Jesse!"

"I'll spend the night."

"Spend it with me."

"You want to go camping or something?"

"If that's what you want to do. Or we could just hang out on the couch and watch TV."

"That sounds like a perfect weekend."

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 3 by Sarah Saint Ives

Monday, August 20, 2001

"What did you find out?" Amanda Bentley sat in the booth across from Mark at the corner cafe and took a sip of the latte he had ordered for her prior to her arrival.

"I don't think we're going to find anybody as talented in his field, Amanda. Nobody else even comes close."

"You checked overseas, too, right?"

"Yes, England, Germany, Scotland, Switzerland, Tokyo, all the best fertility clinics in the world. I've called them all. Their fertility specialists only laugh when I mention Penrose's male pregnancy study."

“What are we going to do?” Her pretty face was stressed. “The baby’s due in December, right?”

“Yes, December. Penrose hasn’t made up his mind exactly what day he’ll do the c-section but I suspect it’ll be around the tenth. If he waits til the thirteen, the baby and I will share a birthday! I was really hoping that we could find another doctor who could do the surgery and reverse those alterations of Jesse’s reproductive system Penrose did during the implantation of the womb. If Penrose is guilty of murdering those two young women, he should go to prison! He’s a dangerous man.”

“Jesse’s life depends on a murderer. Penrose may be planning to kill \*him\* when the baby is born!”

“That’s possible. I \*have\* to find another surgeon. The longer we wait before we say anything, the more danger we put Jesse in and the more chances are of Penrose getting away with murder.”

“And the more chances for us rotting in jail.” Amanda suspired.

“I’m at a loss, Amanda. I still don’t know what to do.”

“For the moment. we can’t do anything except just smile and give Jesse baby clothes.” Amanda said. “Which I know you’ve already started buying. I saw you with that cartload of stuff at BabyLand.”

“You did?” He looked rattled.

She laughed, reached across the table and patted his hand. “Don’t worry. You’re not the only one. Steve went shopping, too, and so did I.”

“Oh, good.” He took a sip of his creamy latte and came up with whipped cream on his nose. “Now I don’t feel so much like a sentimental old man.”

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“What’s the matter, Jesse?” Steve Sloan reached across to buckle his friend’s seat belt, finding he had to let it out a bit before it would fit. “You’re not gonna throw up, are you?”

“No, I haven’t done that in a couple of days. I’m just thinking.”

“About what?”

“About the fact that the baby was already three months along before she was implanted in my body.”

“\*She\*?” Steve grinned broadly. “It’s a she?”

“Yes, I’ll show you the sonogram later. She’s developing normally. According to Penrose, I’m twenty three weeks along.”

“But you’ve only been \*pregnant\* for how long?”

“Since June sixth. Almost ten weeks.”

“So, what’s the problem Jess?”

“The problem is that I’ve been thinking about it a lot and it’s scary. I’ve had a lot of bad dreams lately. I’m carrying a child inside me who was developed completely unnaturally by a man who

acts like she doesn't matter at all. She was \*built\*--almost like a machine. He's the biological father. What if she's like him...some sort of heartless, wicked genius who was designed specifically to commit murder?"

"Oh, Jesse, you've been watching the SciFi channel again." Steve patted his hand. "Don't worry. She's going to be a little angel, just like her mom."

The doctor blushed. "Well, technically I \*am\* the mom, but after she's born, just for the sake of things not sounding so --weird-- I think I'm gonna teach her to call me 'dad'. The truth is--I don't know if I can do this or not, Steve."

"I think it's a little late to change your mind now."

"I know. I'm just panicking."

Steve leaned over and took him in his arms. "She's going to be perfect, Jesse, and I promise you she's not going to be born a murderer."

Jesse clung a few minutes, then drew back to wipe his eyes. "I'm sorry. Please don't tell Mark about this or he'll have me going to more of those pre-natal emotional therapy classes."

"I won't tell him." Steve promised, fondly playing with his hair.

"I mean, just because Penrose is the sperm-donor, and he's a genius who develops fetuses in a plastic case doesn't mean anything. Just because I have no idea what the egg donor was like, and the baby began life in that giant vat of artificial brew he's got bubbling in his laboratory...the one I never got invited to see..."

"Jesse, stop it or I'm going to ask Dad to prescribe you something."

"I'll be happy when she's born so I can see her. I'll feel better when I know she only has one head."

"You didn't see two heads on the sonogram, did you? She's going to be perfect in every way, Jesse." Placing his hands on either side of his friend's face, he forced calming eye contact. "She's going to be beautiful and smart just like you. She'll have your big blue eyes, your cute little nose, your sweet personality and your radiant smile. It doesn't matter who the biological parents are, Jess. She's yours, and she'll be the way you raise her."

Jesse laid a hand on his chest. "I'm so glad you're here with me, Steve. What would I do without you?"

"You'll never know because I'll be here forever, my love." After placing a soft kiss on the younger man's button nose, Steve started the car and drove toward Jesse's apartment. Conversationally, he asked, "Would you feel safer if your own sperm cells had been used to fertilize the egg?"

"Nothing makes me feel very safe except being this close to you." Jesse was still attached to his arm.

"What if Penrose had been able to convert your sperm cell to a functioning egg and fertilize it with male sperm? What if he had used--\*my\* sperm? Then would you feel better about the baby?"

"If that were possible, you're talking about the ultimately perfect baby, Steve. I wish to God it was your baby instead of his."

Steve squeezed his hand as he steered round a corner. "Me, too, Jess. I would dearly love to be

the father. I hope you'll let me take part in her life. Nothing would make me happier."

"What are you talking about? Of course you're going to be a \*big\* part in her life."

"And in yours?"

"You're already in mine, Steve. Big time."

"You ready to move in with Dad and me, yet?"

"No. I can't do that. I have to hang onto some semblance of my independence. Why can't you understand that?"

"Because I want you where I can take care of you and protect you."

"You already do that, and I'm grateful. You want to protect the world, Steve."

"I just want to protect the ones I love."

Jesse smiled at him. "You're such a lovable guy, you and Mark both. I'll never know how I got lucky enough to have the two of you taking care of me the way you do."

"I'll never know how \*I\* got so lucky." Steve said, adding a caress across the pregnant man's slightly rounded belly. "I really want you to come stay with us, Jess."

Jesse took the hand on his stomach and moved it lower to a tight bulge just beneath the navel. A sudden twitch made them both laugh. "She says we'll think about it."

Steve kept the hand on the spot hoping to feel more movement, but the child inside was sleeping. Gazing intimately at his passenger, he murmured, "You don't have to do this alone, Jess. I want to help."

"You are helping. You're the best friend I have in the world, Steve."

"You don't understand. I want us to raise her together. I want us to be a family."

Jesse stifled a sob and was taken immediately into another comforting embrace. "Steve, you're doing this to me on purpose."

Steve pulled to the shoulder of the road and turned his full attention on his friend. "I love you, Jesse. I'm just trying to let you know how I feel about you. I want us to be together."

Jesse lifted his face to gaze at him, no longer ashamed of his brimming eyes. "Are you saying what I think you're saying?"

Hesitantly, Steve kissed his lips. "Yeah. That's what I'm saying."

Jesse pursued the kiss and demanded another one. "Steve, you have to know that I've loved you for a long, long time. Are you just doing this because you figured that out and now I'm going to have a baby, you feel obligated?"

"No, Jesse, I'm not doing it because of the baby." He kissed him again. "I want you. I wanted you \*before\* you got pregnant. I think I wanted you the very first time you smiled at me."

"Oh." Jesse looked up at him in anticipation. Touched, he murmured, "What are you doing tonight?"

“Whatever you want.” Steve said, taking his hand and kissing it.

“Spend the night at my place.”

“Doing what?”

Jesse blushed. “I don’t think I’m up for a night of wild, passionate sex, but we can do \*something\*, and then we can hold each other. We can be together.”

“That sounds good to me.” Steve pressed another kiss into the soft palm. Anxious to get to the apartment, he tucked Jesse under his arm and drove.

\*\*\*\*\*

They sat cuddled together on Jesse’s couch. The TV was on, but neither of them could have cared less about the show. Their eyes were on each other.

“You’re beautiful.” Steve whispered reverently as he lifted Jesse’s shirt to reveal his bare chest. “So beautiful.” After another long, sweet kiss, he bent to kiss a nipple, delighted when it hardened beneath his lips. Sucking it into his mouth, he teased it with his tongue.

Jesse squirmed. “That tickles.” he said, but pulled him closer. “Don’t stop.”

“Are they tender?”

“My nipples? Yeah, a little. They’re more sensitive than they used to be.”

“Would it be possible for you to breast feed?”

Jesse giggled as he sucked on the other nipple. “I doubt that very seriously.”

“So I won’t have to share them with the baby. That’s good.” Steve gently pinched the brown flesh between his lips.

“You really want this with me, Steve?”

The cop sat up to face him. After several hungry kisses, he answered softly. “I really want you, Jesse. I know I’m not the most eloquent guy in the world, so I hope it’s not going to take romantic prose or serenading to win your heart. I love you, plain and simple, and I want to be with you. I’ll do anything for you, Jess. Anything you want.”

Jesse smiled at him lovingly. “You’re so silly, Steve. All you have to do is be here until the end of time.”

“Done.” Steve kissed him again.

As the kiss subsided and they went into a comfortable snuggle, Jesse pondered. “What do you think Mark is going to say about our relationship?”

Steve drew in a ragged moan. “I don’t think he’s going to hold it against us for loving each other.”

“You’re not going to tell him, are you?”

“Not today. Eventually.”

"I understand. We can be discreet."

"I'm not asking you to sneak around with me, Jess. Let's just have some time together before we tell him."

He read disappointment in the blue eyes.

"Or we could give him a call right now and tell him the good news." Steve said, hoping to appease him. "Whatever you want, Jesse. It's up to you."

Jesse squeezed him tightly. "I love you, Steve." he said, "I think I would prefer that we wait at least until tomorrow to tell him."

"What do you have in mind for tonight?" Steve murmured in his ear.

"Maybe a little loving." Jesse answered.

Knowing the younger man was temporarily devoid of the normal male responses to sex, the cop wondered how to sexually approach him without causing him anguish. He settled for slipping one hand down from the swollen nipples to cup the area around the navel. "Jesse, you know I love you. I mean that, so never doubt it. But I've never done anything like this before, not with a man, not even a \*pregnant\* man. So you just take my hand and put it wherever you want it, okay?"

Jesse smiled at him and laid a hand over Steve's hand. "I like it right where it is." he said. "I've never done this before, either, but I think I know where to touch \*you\*." His free hand ventured to his lover's fly. "Can I take it out?"

"Do whatever you like. It's yours." Steve said. He watched in growing excitement as Jesse opened his pants and extracted his stiffening member.

"Mine?" Jesse seemed to like the idea.

"Yeah, sweetheart. All yours."

"What about the rest of you?"

"Everything belongs to you."

"So I can do whatever I want with any part of you?" Jesse stroked the impressive cock in his hand.

"Yeah, as long as it doesn't hurt either one of us." Steve grinned. "What do you wanta do?"

"I've never given a guy a blow job before. I want to try it."

"Well, honey, I'm the guy to practice on." Steve stretched out his legs and made himself comfortable.

Jesse leaned over to sample the purple head, ran his tongue around it. "Can I suck it?"

"That would be great." Steve answered, playing with his hair. "If it doesn't bother you. I know how sick you've been lately."

"I think I can do it as long as you let me know before you...you know..."



“Come?” Steve caressed his cheek. “I’ll tell you.”

Jesse sucked in the large cock, his jaw cracking in protest of the open width.

“Oh, Jesse,” Steve moaned, tangling his hands in his lover’s hair, “It’s not gonna take long, honey. And then I’ll do something for you.”

Jesse sucked the head and pumped the base, which soon had Steve arching and panting. During the course of giving his very first blowjob, Jesse found himself amused that Steve kept up a steady monologue. For a man who normally didn’t talk much, he was certainly verbal during sex.

“Just like that.” Steve urged, “Use your tongue. Yes, that’s good. Yes, that’s perfect.” He rambled on until the boiling point, then grabbed Jesse’s head and pushed him away. Quickly, he encased Jesse’s hand, which was still wrapped around the base, and pumped it faster. As his cream shot high into the air, Steve’s moans increased, still very articulate. “Oh, Jesse, you don’t know how much I love you.”

Jesse was affected to desire by his passionate verbose. “I love you, too, Steve.”

They rolled on the couch until Jesse was lying beneath him. Steve kissed his way down his body, pushing the scrub bottoms down as he approached the abdomen. When his penis was exposed, Jesse whispered, “I don’t think it’ll work, Steve.”

“I want to make you feel good.” Steve said.

“But I can’t get an erection.”

“What makes you feel good?”

Jesse shrugged in discomfort. “Just being in your arms.”

“What about a prostate massage?” Steve kissed the limp organ, willing it to rise, but it laid inert.

“I don’t know. I’ve never had one. A lot of my patients talk about that.”

“About prostate massages?”

“Yeah. One guy says that’s the only thing that makes him ‘get it up’ any more. I thought maybe it was because he’s had so much anal sex.”

“You want me to give you one?”

“Not now. Maybe some other time. How about we just go to bed and hold each other for now?”

“Okay.” Steve hauled him carefully to his feet and led him to the bedroom.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 4 by Sarah Saint Ives

August 21, 2001

\*\*\*\*\*

Jesse woke, enraptured that it had not been a dream. He snuggled in his lover’s muscular arms for another moment before making a necessary trip to the bathroom. Upon his return, he smiled into Steve’s open eyes. “There’s somebody sitting on my bladder.” he explained as he climbed back into bed.

Steve folded him in. "After she's born and you heal, I plan to make it up to you for last night." he said.

"Last night was beautiful, Steve! I wouldn't change a thing."

"It doesn't bother you that you couldn't..."

"I slept right here in your arms all night long. What could be better than that?" Jesse kissed him.

"That was pretty wonderful, all right." Steve glanced toward the clock. "I need to get ready for work."

"Yeah, me, too. Five more minutes."

Steve was easily convinced. "Maybe even ten." He kissed him again and nuzzled against his neck. "Maybe I'll even be a little late."

\*\*\*\*\*

Dr. Homer Penrose glanced up as Jesse entered his office. "What's wrong?" he asked, immediately scanning his belly.

"Nothing." Jesse assured him quickly. He realized how much the male pregnancy project meant to the man, and did not want to cause him undue alarm. "I'm fine. I just came to talk to you about some things."

The look of relief on the handsome but unsmiling face was marked. "Sit down. Tell me what's on your mind."

Jesse plopped down in the indicated chair and chewed his lip nervously. The man behind the desk gazed on him with impassive blue eyes. "Um, I sort of hoped I could confide in you about something...that has developed in my life."

"You're required to confide in me, Jesse. Until this child is born, your body belongs to me and I want to know everything that you do with it. Now, tell me what the hell you're talking about."

The man's directness was daunting. Jesse shivered. "I'm...um...in love." he said softly.

The instant disapproval made him cringe. Penrose's voice was harsh. "In *\*love\**? Did you say you're in *\*love\**?"

Jesse stared at him, wishing he could take back the words, but not ashamed of his feelings. "Yeah. That's what I said."

"With whom?" The tone was parental.

"With..." Clearing his throat, he uttered the name. "Steve."

Penrose's eyes rolled in rancor. "Goddamn it, Jesse! Steve Sloan? You're fucking that cop? Have you lost your mind? Don't you realize how dangerous he is for you right now?"

Jesse's forehead wrinkled in confusion. "Dangerous? How?"

"No sex. I told you plainly at the beginning. No sex with women, and especially no sex with men. It's too dangerous for the baby. That's why you're physically incapable of having an orgasm."

"I thought it was because... Steve didn't...didn't..."

"No sex of any kind. What did you do with him?"

"Nothing. I just..."

"What?"

"I... gave him a blow job."

"Did he touch you in any way?"

"No."

"Jesse, I don't even want him to put a finger in you. He could ruin everything we've worked so hard for. He could damage you and the baby."

"I'll make sure he knows."

Penrose shook his head. "Not good enough. I want you to stay away from him, do you hear me?"

"What? I can't stay away from him! I love him."

"Your little infatuation is probably no more than your hormones going deranged because your body is changed. Staying away from him is the only way to be safe."

"But I'm going to move in with him. He asked me to, and I'm planning to move this weekend."

"No. I mean it, Jesse. You will *not* move in with him. How can I be sure you won't do something to damage my child? You can't guarantee he won't ravish you and injure the womb."

"But..." Jesse suddenly felt empty. "He'll be so hurt..."

"I'm sure the man will still be available after the child is born. In the meantime, since you're bent on moving, I want you to pack up your belongings and move in with me. I want you where I can keep an eye on you. I do not want anything or anyone to fuck this up. You made a commitment to me when you agreed to do this. I expect you to hold up your end of the bargain. Do you understand?"

Jesse's lower lip trembled. "Move in with you?"

"Yes, until December."

"What about Steve?"

"I don't give a damn about 'Steve'! All I care about is this experiment and the results. You're an adult, Jesse. I don't want to hear whining and I don't want an argument. Just do as I say."

Jesse stood and walked toward the door. He paused with his hand on the knob. "Dr. Penrose, I know you couldn't possibly understand my need for love right now, but it's important to me. I need Steve and his dad in my life. You can't take them away from me at this crucial time. Please don't tell me to stay away from them."

Penrose got up from his chair and advanced upon him. "Love is fleeting, Jesse. Love is a fairy, flitting around in your foolish little heart, never lighting long enough to let you get a good look at

what it really is. You don't need it. You don't know \*what\* you need, but I do. If you require human contact to maintain your sense of human worth, I can assist you when I have the time to spare."

"You're offering to be my lover in Steve's place?" Jesse stared at him in disbelief.

"Yes. I may be far beyond humans in every other guise, but my physical senses remain. I have functioning lips, arms and genitalia. If you need a love affair, then have it with me. Since you're so proficient in applying fellatio, you may perform it on me later this evening. I know your limitations and the dangers, so you will be safe with me."

Jesse stood for several long seconds before he realized his mouth was open but he had not spoken a word. Snapping his teeth together quickly, he looked away. "Please let me go talk to Steve about this."

"I would rather you didn't."

"But..."

"I will accompany you to your apartment and help you get your clothes. We can move you today."

"Doctor..."

"No arguments. Remember the contract."

"But Steve is important!"

"As important as the baby?"

Jesse pondered only a second before his answer. "Yes! \*More\* important!"

"If he's that important to you, he's worth waiting for."

"But he won't understand if I don't explain it to him."

"Explain it to him later. If you go to him now, he'll try to convince you to abandon the project. Think about it, Jesse. The child doesn't belong to him. Do you really think he won't resent it? Do you really think he loves you as much as you love him? Are you that important to \*him\*? You're just fooling yourself."

A tear slid down his cheek. "Please let me talk to him!"

"Sorry, Jesse. No. In fact, since you're so infatuated with him, I'm afraid I'm going to have to take matters into my own hands. You're forbidden to leave without me."

"You can't do that!" Jesse tried to back away from him, but Penrose grabbed him by the arms and pulled him back to the desk. "Please, Dr. Penrose, let me go!" he cried.

A large hand covered his mouth to silence him, and a gruff voice threatened in his ear. "Shut up! I don't want to hurt you, Jesse, but I will if I have to!"

Jesse whimpered, but did not struggle.

"Good. Now, we're going out to the car together, and you're going to behave yourself. You're going to walk quietly along beside me and get in the car. We're going to your apartment, get your clothes and take them to my place. No more whining, no more crying."

Frightened, Jesse nodded.

“Good. Let’s go.” The tall man led the way out the door.

\*\*\*\*\*

Amanda yawned as she came from the morgue, shedding gloves and gown as she walked. “Hi Steve, what’s up?” she greeted.

“I’m looking for Jesse.” Steve answered. “Have you seen him?”

“I haven’t seen him since this morning when he went to see Dr. Penrose.” She glanced up at him pensively. “I’ll page him and see if he’s in the hospital.”

“Why did he go see Penrose?”

“He said he had some things to talk to him about.”

“Amanda,” Steve took her arm and led her down the hall to Mark Sloan’s office. “Tell me what you think about Penrose.”

“What I think?” She cleared her throat and glanced evasively away. “In what regard?”

They entered the office without knocking and faced Mark, who reading from his computer and sipping coffee. He pushed his eyeglasses to the tip of his nose and looked over them to smile at his son. “What’s going on, Steve?”

“Where’s Jesse?” Steve asked without prelude.

“I don’t know.” Mark looked clueless. “I saw him at about eight this morning. I asked him if he had seen \*you\* since you didn’t come home last night, and he told me that you spent the night at his place. I got called away and didn’t get to ask any more questions. Was he okay last night?”

“Yes, he was fine. I just wanted to spend some time with him.”

Amanda nodded suspiciously. “He was acting really strange this morning. He was anxious to talk to Penrose.”

“Why did he want to talk to Penrose?” Mark asked.

Steve grunted in discomfort. “I think he felt the need to talk to him about me.”

“Why, son?”

Dropping into a red leather chair, Steve sighed. “Dad, we need to talk, but not here, and not now. Later. First, I want to find Jesse.”

Mark and Amanda exchanged a troubled glance before the elderly doctor began reluctantly. “Steve, we’ve got something to tell you about Penrose. Or at least, we \*think\* it’s about Penrose.”

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 5 by Sarah Saint Ives

“I can’t believe the two of you kept this a secret from me!” It wasn’t anger Steve was displaying as he paced the length and breadth of the office--it was horror. “The man’s a cold-blooded killer and you didn’t tell me! Why?”

Amanda wisely kept her mouth shut and let Mark do the talking. The older Sloan’s voice trembled

as he stood to face his son. "Steve, I'm sorry, but if you think about it a minute, you'll know why. Jesse's life depends on Penrose's expertise. Nobody else can put him back together after the baby is born. If you arrest him and he goes to prison, what's going to happen to Jesse?"

Steve stopped in midstride and put a hand over his eyes in prescient understanding. "Oh, god. He took Jesse." he said. "Dad, where does he live?"

"I can find out." Mark went directly back to his computer and began typing in commands. "You think he took Jesse to his house?"

"Where else would he take him?"

"He has a laboratory somewhere. He talks about it."

"We'll search both places. Just get me the address. And after we find him, I want to talk to you about a few things."

"Steve, I..." Mark's distressed eyes scrutinized him for signs of forgiveness. "If you choose to press charges against me for withholding evidence, I'll understand."

"You could have talked to me about it!" Steve rebuked him. "I'm your \*son\*!"

Mark released a short sigh and hit the print button on his computer. The printer whirred into action. "I'm sorry, Steve. Jesse means a lot to me. You know that."

"He means a lot to me, too, Dad." Steve went to take the paper from the printer. He paused to lay a hand on his father's shoulder. "Come with me. Let's go get Jesse."

The doctor looked even older than his years as he got up to follow him.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jesse tested the door one last time and carefully descended the steps into the basement. He was locked in with no escape. A captive. He collapsed on the futon, wrapping himself in a blanket. "I just couldn't keep my mouth shut." he sobbed.

His day had been terrifying. A few of his belongings had been transported to Penrose's house, and were now stored in the basement, as was he. Books, clothing and other personal items were in boxes along the wall. The futon belonged to Penrose.

Something smelled bad. Covering his mouth and nose with a pillow, Jesse grimaced at the stench in the room. He stretched to flip on an overhead light, speaking aloud to the bare walls. "It smells like death in here."

The sound of his own voice echoed by grayness made him cringe. He peered around ominously for the source of the smell, finally leaving the pillow and the safety of the futon to wander to the four corners of the twenty by twenty foot room. He followed his nose to the toilet area, trying not to breathe too deeply. He lifted the edge of a folded tarp and stirred the smell tenfold. "Oh, god!" he groaned, hurrying for the toilet. He was thankful he hadn't eaten since breakfast.

When he stopped heaving, he reached for tissue and wiped his mouth. Holding his nose, he bent to examine the tarp and found the inside layer was covered with black fungus. He was a doctor. He knew what it was.

Blood. Old blood and other decomposed body fluids.

Someone had died here.

Jesse gasped and hurried back to the futon, curled up on his side and pulled the blanket over him.

\*\*\*\*\*

"It's a nice house." Mark commented as Steve parked at the curb.

"Jesse's here. I can feel him."

"You can *feel* him? Are you having psychic episodes?"

"I don't know. All I know is that he's here, and he's scared." Steve turned and pressed a palm to his father's chest. "You stay by the car."

Mark wanted to argue. Reluctantly, he obeyed, cautioning him as his tall son drew his weapon and proceeded to the front door. "Be careful, Steve."

Steve moved to the door and knocked sharply with the butt of his handgun. After a short wait, he knocked again. "Penrose! Open up!" he called.

The door was yanked open by the obstinate resident, Dr. Homer Penrose. "What the hell do you want, Sloan?" he demanded.

"Jesse." Steve answered bluntly. "Now. Where is he?"

"It's not my job to keep up with him. Why would you come here looking for him?"

"He's here." Steve pointed the gun at him. "I'm coming in, so just back away from the door with your hands raised."

The angry doctor presented his hands. "You're going to be sorry for this, Sloan. You're making a big mistake here."

"I don't think so." Steve said. "If I am, I'll be sure and apologize later. For now, turn around."

Penrose whirled, arms stretched above his head. "If you intend to search the house without a warrant, you'll be doing more than apologizing." he said. "You'll be out of a job and the LAPD will be compensating me for this grievance."

"I can live with that." Steve said. "At this time, I'm holding you for questioning and I *am* searching the house. If I find Jesse here, you'll be under arrest for kidnapping."

"Kidnapping?" Penrose laughed raucously. "I'd like to see you make that one stick. I hope you're keeping it in mind that Jesse's life hangs in the balance. Two lives, his and the baby's, depend on me. If you arrest me, he'll die and the baby may die."

"Call me optimistic, but I'm willing to bet there are a thousand other doctors who can do that surgery." Steve said, clapping handcuffs on the man's wrists. "I think you told everyone you were the only one who could do it so they would *think* his life depends on you."

"You're willing to take that risk?" Penrose asked.

Steve shoved him roughly into a chair. "Yeah, I'm willing." he answered. He went to the door and called, "Dad, you wanta come keep an eye on him while I look for Jesse?"

Mark entered the house and took the handgun Steve offered him. "What do I do?" he asked.

"If he moves an inch, blow his brains out." Steve answered. "You can handle that, can't you?"

"Oh, I think so." Mark gave Penrose a look of deadly conviction.

"Be right back." Steve left him in charge of their prisoner and went to search the house.

\*\*\*\*\*

The basement door swung open and feet appeared on the first step. Jesse burrowed deeper beneath the blanket, shuddering at the thought of what Penrose had in store for him. The shoes stepped down another step, then another until he could see long legs in blue trousers. He shivered, thinking about attempting a break. He felt weak, too weak to make any such attempt. He knew he would only be overpowered and punished for his efforts.

As the man descended the stairs slowly, a voice broke through the gloom of the basement. "Jesse? Are you here?"

The young doctor sat upright so quickly he felt dizzy. "Steve!" he cried. "Steve!" Jumping up, he rushed into the arms of the captain, hugging him desperately. "God, I was so scared! Steve, how did you find me so fast?"

Steve kissed his forehead, his nose, his cheek, his lips, lifted him up and hugged him tightly. "I just knew you were here. I don't know how. I just knew."

"I love you." Jesse kissed him again, and received several more kisses in return. "I knew you'd find me."

"Are you okay? Did he hurt you?"

"No, but he threatened to. He hurt someone, though. Take a look at the tarp over there. And hold your nose."

Steve glanced over, unwilling to let go of his lover. "I'll look later. It's a dead body?"

"No, but that's what *was* wrapped in it at one time."

"Are you sure?"

"Pretty sure."

"Then we'll call forensics and get them down here to take a look." With that, Steve turned with him and led him back up the stairs to freedom.

\*\*\*\*\*

Penrose was glaring when they approached him. "He came here of his own free will." he said. "I invited him to live with me and he accepted."

"Is that why you had him locked in the basement?" Steve asked, seating Jesse on the sofa. He took the gun from Mark's hand and pointed to the phone. "Call for backup. This man is going to jail today on two counts. One is kidnapping, the other is suspicion of murder."

Mark nodded. "Can we make the murder charge stick?"



"We can if that tarp in the basement has any evidence on it, and Jesse thinks it does."

"Good." Mark went to the phone and called the police.

"Jesse, you were a guest in my house." Penrose said. "If you locked yourself in the basement, it's not my fault."

"I'm pressing charges." Jesse said firmly. "You kidnapped me and I'll testify to that."

"You'll also have to explain to the world about your baby." Penrose reminded him. "This project wasn't going to be widely publicized, but now it will make the front page news of every magazine in the world. You'll be known as the 'pregnant male doctor', and no one will ever forget it. Are you willing to live with that kind of publicity? And there's something else you're forgetting. I'm the only one who can undo what was done to you in the implanting of the womb. They may get another doctor who can save your life, but you will never have use of your male reproductive system again unless \*I\* perform the operation to restore it."

Jesse swallowed hard and glanced at Steve before he spoke. "I don't believe you. But even if you're telling the truth, I'm fine with it. Somehow, that just isn't important to me right now."

Hanging up the phone, Mark sat beside Jesse and put an arm around him. "We'll find a doctor who can do it." he promised. "Don't worry."

Penrose shook his head, unable to hide his contempt for them. "If you just hadn't started up this stupid love affair with this bastard, everything would have been okay."

Mark's quick glance proved he understood what the man was talking about. He scanned Steve, who didn't react, then Jesse, who looked down. "Actually, everything would not have been okay because I figured out what happened to those two young women who had been killed for their fetuses. You killed them, and the child in Jesse's body is one of those babies, isn't it?"

"The child in Jesse's body belongs to me. I made it and I will take it when it's born. My child will be superior, and no one else should raise it. She will need training so she can live up to her potential."

"Sorry, you gave up the right to be a parent when you made me the other parent." Jesse said. "Not to mention the murder and kidnapping thing. She's \*my\* baby, and I will raise her--with Steve and Mark's help."

Both Steve and Mark smiled proudly at him.

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 6 by Sarah Saint Ives

So when did this happen?" Mark asked as the two lovers sat snuggled together on the couch that evening. "Last night?"

"Yeah." Steve answered, smiling at Jesse. He took a deep breath. "He's everything I ever wanted, Dad. I'm hoping he'll put my name on the birth certificate as the father, and that we can live happily ever after, Jesse, me, you and the baby."

Mark nodded, nonplussed. "I don't see why that arrangement couldn't work. I'm glad you included me in there. I like that. I'm really looking forward to being a grandfather."

"Thanks, Dad. You'll be a wonderful grandpa."

"Steve, are you sure it's not just because of the..."

"I'm sure, Dad." To demonstrate his point, Steve turned and kissed Jesse gently. "The baby may have given me the incentive to finally tell him how I feel about him, but it wasn't the reason I felt this way."

Jesse's adoring gaze prevented Mark from asking him the same question. Love was obvious, and the older man wasn't going to dispute it. "I don't know what to say," he said. "I'm happy for you."

"So are we, Dad." Steve said. "I just wish we were certain about the birth and the surgery. Do you have anyone in mind?"

"There are several I haven't called, yet. We still have until December. Don't worry. I won't give up until we find one who will do it."

"Do you think Penrose will publicize this to death? Should we change our names and move to another planet?" Steve asked.

"Probably be a good idea, at least for a little while." Mark answered thoughtfully. "I don't think you and I have anything to worry about, Steve, but Jesse definitely shouldn't stick around and be a target for the media while he's still pregnant."

"We'll both take a leave of absence and hide out a while." Steve squeezed Jesse's hand.

"Would you mind if I tagged along?" Mark asked carefully. "I don't want to intrude on your relationship, but I don't want Jesse far away from a doctor's care, either."

Jesse smiled, got up and put his arms around the older doctor's neck. "We'd love it if you came along," he said. He kissed Mark's cheek. "Thank you for caring about me. I love you."

Mark hugged him back, a slight blush coloring his tan. "I love you, too, Jess. Thanks for having my grandchild."

Jesse drew back, beaming. "She's going to be rotten," he laughed. "Between you and Steve, she doesn't have a chance of turning out normal."

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Friday, August 24, 2001

Arriving in Jacksonville, Florida, Jesse studied his newly acquired driver's license that gave him a new name and gender. He was grateful for Steve's acquaintance with the top man in the I.D. industry, and that the man owed the police captain a favor. Now, posing as Steve's pregnant wife, he had no problems with publicity.

Posing as a female was an easy task. He wore fingernail polish, maternity clothes and a bit of mascara. Prosthetic breasts sewn into a bra made him ultra feminine. His voice was not deep, so he didn't have to work hard on sounding the part, too. Being pregnant, no stranger would give his gender a second thought. His cover was practically foolproof.

He waited patiently while Steve called a car rental agency, observing passersby in the airport, happy that his presence seemed to attract no stares. He had stared in a mirror the entire morning. He knew he didn't look like a diva, but then, glancing around him, neither did half the women in seated in their area. And he did not intend to be in public much as long as they were in Florida. For the first time in his life, he was looking forward to 'hiding out'.

Mark had dropped wearily into a chair cradling four carry-bags in his lap. Sitting next to him, Jesse leaned on him, yawning. "I can't wait to get to a hotel." he said.

"We're not going to a hotel." Mark said, watching Steve walk across the area, cellphone to one ear, a finger in the other so he could hear. "I rented a beach house."

"Cool." Jesse couldn't wait to get to it. "How far away from here?"

"I don't know, really." Mark gave a little shrug. "It's on the beach."

Jesse grinned. "Duh." he remarked. "Is it as big as your house in Malibu?"

"No, about half that size, I think."

"Two bedrooms?"

"Yeah. Completely furnished."

"Are you going to have a problem with Steve and me sleeping together?"

Mark gave him a little wink. "Not as long as you don't wake me up with all the moaning and groaning." he joked.

"I promise we'll be discreet." Jesse laughed.

Steve was putting his phone away. "Hertz is bringing us a car." he said. "We'll find a good restaurant, then we'll go find our house."

"I've heard Cracker Barrel is a great place to eat in the southeast. Is there one here?"

"I'll check on it." Steve sat down beside Jesse and put an arm around him. "It doesn't matter. I could eat at any old restaurant. I'm starved. What about you, Jess?"

"Southern cooking sounds great right now. Maybe some turnip greens and grits, or biscuits and gravy. That sounds pretty good, actually." Jesse said with a grin.

"You feel okay then?"

"I'm fine, just tired. So is Mark."

Steve stretched a long arm across and touched the older man's shoulder. "You want me to grab some sandwiches from a vending machine or something?"

"No, I think we can last a while longer." Mark said. Gazing at the large blue screen that listed flights, he murmured, "We don't have to testify against Penrose until the middle of next month, so we can relax a while. Community General is covered. Let's just enjoy the rest of the summer in Florida."

"The humidity, the searing heat, the bugs..." Steve commented.

"The beach, the ocean..." Jesse added. "Too bad we didn't bring our surfboards."

"You think I'd let you loose with a surfboard right now?" Steve laughed. "Not for a long time to come. Maybe not ever again."

"Aw, come on, Steve. You know little Stephanie March is going to want to learn how to surf."

What's a good age to get her started? Two? Three?"

"Forty eight." Steve answered. "Until then, she's staying on the beach."

Jesse kissed him. "You're going to be a wonderful dad." he murmured.

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Sunday, September 16, 2001

The trip had been tiresome. On Friday the 14th, they had testified against Penrose and judgment had been made against him. He had been sentenced to life in prison for two charges of murder and one charge of kidnapping. For Jesse, it was a very emotional ordeal. He was glad Steve was there to hold his hand.

Because Jesse was in the third trimester and for other national reasons, they had chosen to drive rather than fly. It was a long, long trip from coast to coast. They had stopped often, had spent a night in a nice motel in Dallas, and had brought books on audio to keep them occupied. The trip back seemed impossibly endless even with Mark's entertaining chatter and the murder mystery being eloquently told from the CD player.

Back in Florida, Jesse woke up in the back seat, his head on a pillow. "Tell me why we had to make this trip back to Jacksonville?" he asked crankily.

Mark, who was driving, glanced at him in the rearview mirror. "Because you're having the baby here. Dr. Arveson is here...thank God we found her. She can do your operation and take care of you til you're healed. You still need to hide out until after Stephanie's born unless you want the world to know everything. Do you want to see your face on the front page of the USA Tattler? Again?"

"No, of course not." Jesse remembered when his picture had been in the tabloid, a few years ago when he thought he had been abducted by aliens. He grinned. "I just want to get it over with and get on with my life as a mother and a wife."

"That could be something else you don't want to do in Los Angeles."

"Yes, I do. I'll have the baby here because I know this is where Dr. Arveson is, but as soon as it's over, I want to go home."

Steve reached into the back seat to pat his belly. "It's all up to you, Jesse."

"If it goes the way I want it to, everything will be fine." Jesse caught his hand and kissed it. "I love you, Steve."

"Dad, could you pull over?" Steve said.

Mark put on his signal and pulled to the shoulder of the road. "What's wrong?"

"I'm getting in back with Jesse."

"Okay, just don't do anything obscene back there."

Steve transferred himself to the back seat, settled in a snuggle with his lover. "I think we're going to be getting \*pretty\* obscene back here. If you can't stand to watch, close your eyes."

"Well," Mark mockingly huffed. "Driving isn't going to be easy with my eyes closed." He laughed.

"Then keep your eyes on the road." Steve gave Jesse a long, passionate kiss.

"Okay," Mark said with a sigh. "But we're not moving until you both have your seatbelts on."

End Notes:

Saint Ives messagesforsarah@yahoo.com

wrote: Merlin

Please post this on the the lists for me. Since my mother died today, I unsubbed her from all the lists.

Thank you

Jeremy Saint Ives

[Back to index](#)

Chapter 7 by Sarah Saint Ives

Tuesday December 4, 2001

Holding his back to balance his enormous belly, Jesse waddled toward the beach house. He pushed back strands of his blonde hair as the wind whipped it mercilessly into his blue eyes. The sky was slightly overcast, but it was still a beautiful day on the beach.

A sudden sharp pain in his lower abdomen doubled him over. Sinking to his knees in the sand, he breathed deeply, hoping against hope that it wasn't labor. When the pain subsided after only a couple of minutes, he regained his feet and finished his journey to the house.

Steve and Mark were watching a game on television in the living room. In the kitchen, Jesse made tea and took them each a cup. "I'm going to fix us some lunch." he said. "What about soup and sandwiches?"

"Sounds good." Steve said, patting him on the rear. "Do we have any ham?"

"I think so. What kind of soup do you want?"

"Whatever we have."

"How about veggie-rice?"

"Great." Steve winked at him.

Jesse blew him a kiss as he went back to the kitchen. Being Steve's lover made him extraordinarily happy, sometimes to the point of giddiness, and he could see nothing but blissful togetherness in their future. He was in love with the ideal person, had the most wonderful father-in-law in the world and would soon be the parent of the most beautiful baby ever born. No other life could be more perfect. It was better than a fairy tale.

He made five sandwiches on wheat bread, complete with swiss cheese, tomatoes, lettuce and sandwich spread, stacked them on a plate, then turned to stir the simmering soup on the stove top. Another unexpected pain forced a cry from his lips that brought Mark and Steve running.

Jesse stood bent over the stove, grimacing in pain.

His protectors gazed at him in wonder. "What happened?" Steve asked.

Shivering, Jesse straightened up and calmly turned off the heat beneath the soup. "I need to go to the hospital." he said. "I'm in labor."

\*\*\*\*\*

Dr. Natalie Arveson lifted the sheet to peer under it. "How many pains have you had now?"

"Four. They're about ten minutes apart."

"It's happening too quickly." The doctor looked worried. Turning to her assistant, she instructed, "Get him prepped for an emergency C-section and restorative surgery." As she examined, she spoke to Jesse. "You'll probably feel the urge to push. Don't. Just try to breathe and relax."

Jesse gripped Steve's hand as the fifth contraction struck. "I need drugs." he groaned. "Lots and lots of drugs. God, this hurts! Don't leave me, Steve."

"I'm right here, baby."

"Stay with me."

"I will." Steve promised. "Forever."

"I love you."

"Love you, too, Jess." He leaned over and kissed him.

\*\*\*\*\*

The baby was brought into the world bloody and strangled. She was immediately suctioned, wrapped in a soft towel and handed to Steve, who shed tears of rapture as he looked at his beautiful new daughter for the first time.

When she was taken away for cleaning, he turned his attention back to his lover, who was now undergoing more serious surgery. In cap, gown, gloves and mask, Steve tried not to watch. After half an hour of meticulous silence, he asked, "Is everything going okay?"

"Oh, yes. No problem." Dr. Arveson assured him. "He's going to be one hundred percent. Everything will function perfectly as soon as he heals. The only problem you're going to have will be how to explain all this to the child when she's old enough to ask questions."

Steve breathed relief. "We'll worry about that when the time comes." he said. "Thank you, doctor."

"Any time." she answered with a twinkle.

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Thursday, December 13, 2001

"Stephanie March Sloan, born at 2:25 PM on Dec. 4, 2001, weighed six pounds, two ounces and was eighteen inches long." Mark read to the baby from his journal, then touched her tiny nose. "And her grandpa is going to give her everything her little heart desires."

Sitting beside him on the couch, Steve smiled gave him a grin. "Yeah, only until you run out of money, dad. You need to blow out your candles, now."

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!" Jesse sang as he set the cake bearing seventy-seven blazing candles on the coffee table. "Make a wish!"

Mark laughed. "I want to still be around to see my granddaughter graduate from medical school." he wished and blew out the candles. Incredibly, he extinguished them all with a single blast of air.

"That's not too tough," Steve said. "Considering she's a genius. That could happen in a couple of years."

"I seriously doubt it will be that quickly." Mark said. "She's already nine days old and she still can't read and write."

Jesse laughed. "She's a normal, healthy, happy baby." he said. "And I'm ready for us to move back to California and get on with our lives. I want to practice medicine again. And Steve's getting a little restless, so I think he'll be glad to get back to his job, too."

"Well, I'm retiring." Mark announced. "I plan to spend the next few years doing what I've always dreamed about."

"What's that?" asked Jesse.

"Spoiling my grandchild."

~the end~

End Notes:

Sarah will be missed by all of us

[Back to index](#)

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