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## Twists of Envy, Part Five

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## Twists of Envy (Part Five)

*Kathryn Allen*

Two years later, Larry pulled into the visitors' section of the parking lot of an old building. He felt a twinge of sadness as he opened the car door to get out—as he did every week. He doubted he could ever come here with a light heart.

He greeted the nurse and sat down on one of the old sofas in the waiting room. He had just begun to read an old issue of Parenting when the doctor came out to greet him. Larry greeted him with a weary familiarity. The doctor smiled understandingly at him and said, "Come on upstairs... the nurse has just finished feeding him."

Larry followed the doctor upstairs to room one-eleven. It had always been room one-eleven. Larry rather disliked that number—it was too repetitive. He preferred abstract numbers like two-seventeen. He took little comfort in routine these days.

The doctor showed him into the room. "Hey there, Alex, how are we doing?" Larry asked softly.

The huddled figure in the corner was at first unresponsive, continuing to rock back and forth. Then it turned, and looked up at Larry with big, curious eyes.

The doctor turned to Alex. "I'm very sorry... there's really nothing we can do for your friend. We've tried everything to reverse his regression, but..."

Larry looked down at Alex, who was busy playing with his toes. Alex giggled happily at his ten little friends, who seemed to be engrossed in everything he had to say. He gurgled conversationally at them for a while and then lost interest. Alex pulled a blanket out from underneath his diaper and curled up against the wall, cooing contentedly. Larry looked back at the doctor.

The doctor lightly touched Larry's shoulder. "Larry, I'm so very sorry..."

Larry looked at the doctor and smiled, almost wistfully. "No, doctor, don't be sorry. You don't understand. He's finally found what he's been looking for."