



Josephine's Job

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by Jourdan Cameron

Josephine's job was simple.

Amy sat in the waiting room, twisting her greasy brown hair between her fingers. She'd been

waiting awhile for another baby- it had been whole a month since the last time she bore a

clone, and she was close to getting evicted, *again*.
Business as usual.

*“Gonna get clone today,
gonna get a clone ba-bay, ”*
she sang to the empty room,
wondering

who was in charge of
decorating the cold, grim
space. The waiting room
was mostly bare,

save the brown folding
metal chairs that lined the
off-white walls.

“Give me a few dollars, ”
she thought to herself, *“and
I could fix this place up. ”*
She'd always had quite the

interest in interior design, though she never quite had the budget to see her

master plan through to completion. Up until a year ago, she didn't have a space to decorate.

The door at the far end of the room swung open.

“Doctor Valentine will see you now,” Josephine half-sighed from the doorway. She was just as

undecorated as the waiting

room- her flat blonde hair fell to her shoulders, which were

covered by a stark white lab coat- it almost hurt to look upon it.

“It’s about time,” said Amy, springing from her seat. “I have to make rent this month. What’s

up, Josie? Is that a new lab coat?”

“All is well.”

The two walked down the

barren and gritty hallway.
Amy wondered about how
she could fix

the place up. A fresh coat of
paint, perhaps orange, could
warm the place up. She'd
definitely

have to do something about
the lighting, and the
concrete floor? That's gotta
go.

“You know, these
fluorescent lights aren't
very flattering, you guys
should switch to something

warmer,” babbled Amy.
Josephine didn’t respond.

Amy felt a little
underdressed in Josephine’s
presence; Amy’s wrinkled
blue blouse and jeans

felt insufficient behind
Josephine’s simple white
coat and scrubs.“

Josie, has anybody ever told
you that you’re ambivalent?
You’re ambivalent.”

Josephine

paused, and turned to face

Amy. Her large blue eyes seemed fixed- Amy couldn't recall ever

having seen them shift position. She only ever turned her head to look at things.

“No, not that I know of. In fact, I'm not sure how that word applies in this context. Are you

absolutely positive that's how you'd describe me?”

Amy let out an awkward

warbling noise vaguely
resembling laughter as she
walked a few

more steps. “Pretty positive.
Hey, when’s the check
going to clear? My
landlord’s not too keen
on waiting.”

“I do not oversee the
availability of funds, though
they ought be available
immediately,” she
replied coldly.

“Oh. Well do you know who

oversees interior design in here? This is no way to decorate a

baby's nursery!"

Josephine stopped by the door at the end of the hall. Amy felt a faint, nagging sensation

around the edge of her conscience. Something was wrong. Something was *terribly* wrong.

"This is where the procedure will take place, as

it did previously. Please remember to return

for your checkup next month.”

“Josie, I can’t believe I forgot to bring this up last time I was here, but the door’s the wrong

color! It doesn’t match anything! You could’ve used a neutral matte black, or a shiny white to

match the walls- even *baby blue* would’ve been

acceptable. Look at the door, Josie- the stain doesn't work. That's *mahogany!*”

Josephine walked away.

“What a weirdo,” Amy muttered as she opened the mismatched door. “*Gonna get a clone ba-*

bay,” she sang as she entered the room.

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Helene sat in the waiting room, her hands shaking.

She barely convinced herself that she

wasn't too scared to run; she'd found too good a deal to be too scared to follow through.

Helene had gone too far to back out. Too good, too far, not too scared. She couldn't help but

feel less than comforted by the brutal sterility of the waiting room she'd spent the better part of

her day in; it was a cold room with a concrete floor and notably ugly metal chairs. The Stuge

medical facility was a rather unusual place- it was nothing like the bright and welcoming

space that the brochure promised. Ever since she accepted the strange brochure from Victor,

the stranger man who approached her a few chilly evenings ago, she doubted

the truth of

everything. Helene gazed into the little brochure that spoke of seemingly unspeakable things,

her eyes fixated on the words at the upper left hand side of the brochure.

“Save a baby, bear a clone!”

“Doctor Valentine will see you now.”

She clutched the vibrantly-colored brochure in her quaking hands, having pored

over it again

and again- becoming pregnant with a clone in exchange for money struck her immeasurably

absurd- yet here she was, ready to do just that.

Her legs felt unstable as she stood up and approached the woman standing at the door across the room.

“Please follow me,” she said.

The woman who led her through the corridor to the doctor's "office" was just as welcoming as

the waiting room. The little blonde woman seemed like an unfeeling little girl- her cold blue

eyes and unstyled shoulder-length blonde hair were reminiscent of a doll that nobody ever

played with. In her years on the streets, Helene had seen some strange folks. There

was

Nancy, whose wild eyes stared in two different directions, leading to her untimely demise by

truck.

“Bless her soul, ” thought Helene.

There was Ricky, who was also Justin and Taylor and Rob, depending on when you talked to

him- he wasn't quite right in the head, especially during

the summer.

In all her years on the street, she'd never met a lonely doll. She mustered the courage to ask

a question.

“Hey, what’s your name?”

“Josephine.” She spoke just above a whisper, her gentle voice finding little haven in the once-

white walls of the long, dim hallway. She couldn’t help but feel that Josephine had

dismissed

her in some way- her apathy did nothing to allay her fear.

She was absolutely convinced that what she was doing was wrong, but nightmarishly, her

legs kept dragging her forward. In spite of the fact that her actions would cost a life, she

couldn't

“So, Josephine, how long before I need to come

back?”

“Expect an ordinary gestation period,” came the quick and soft reply, a rehearsed thing worn

down by practice. “Return on the first Monday of the next month for a checkup. During the

final trimester of your pregnancy, you will receive room and board at no expense.”

“Thanks.” Helene’s shaking

hands and quaking legs
found no solace in
Josephine's words.

They were too cold to stop
the shivering.

Josephine led Helene to a
door at the end of the
hallway.

“This is where the
procedure will take place.
Please remember to return
for your checkup next
month.”

Helene did her best to show

her gratitude. “Thank you so much,” she gushed nervously, “This

is an amazing opportunity for a girl on the streets.”

Josephine walked away. Helene’s hands shook as she grasped the worn silvery knob, and

she stole a quick backwards glance. Josephine was advancing down the hallway

mechanically- she could’ve been a doll.

Helene opened the door.

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Rose sat in the waiting room, her legs wrapped one about the other, wringing her hands

beneath the portentously flickering fluorescents.

She'd been without an address for the past

few months. Having had a falling out with her parents (who promptly evicted her from the

warmth of their home),
Rose found herself sleeping
in a stranger's garden. It
wasn't too bad

during the summer months-
a Rose sleeping in a
flowerbed was, to her,
somewhat poetic.

The trouble was winter.
When the cold and frost and
snow come with their teeth
and claws,

roses don't tend to fare
particularly well- especially
if they're strange girls in

their early

twenties with no
employment to speak of,
trespassing in the gardens of
strangers.

She spent her days doing
funny things for funnier bits
of money- she often
recycled things in

exchange for a bit of
money- she often wondered
where the cans and bottles
wound up

going- not that it mattered

much to her.

She spent her nights looking for a suitable garden- she wouldn't trust any old flowerbed- she

looked for gardens with plants tall enough to obscure her dozing form.

On a particularly cloudy, specifically nondescript day, Rose was collecting cans on the street

when she was approached by a short man in semi-

formal clothing- he
introduced himself as

Victor. He told her about an
opportunity to make an
honest living and help a
couple whose

newborn was in danger.
Reluctantly, she gave this
strange, short person her
trust.

And now, here she was,
waiting to become surrogate
mother to a clone.

The door at the far end of

the room swung open, and Josephine walked in.

“Doctor Valentine will see you now.”

Rose unfurled her legs and sprung up, her hands slick with sweat.

“W-what- is it happening now?”

“Yes, you’ll be implanted with an embryo,” replied Josephine flatly.

Rose’s nose turned red, and her voice began to quake.

“What happens next?”

“You’ll become pregnant and give birth to the clone of a child whose liver is in need of

replacement. You’ll be paid monthly, unless you opt to stay here for the entirety of your

pregnancy, in which case, you will receive a stipend upon the child’s birth.”

At this point, Rose was crying. Josephine took her

hand, and half-led, half-dragged her to the

hallway.

“You need not worry, the risks are minimal. There have been no casualties in this program

thus far.”

Rose sobbed.

“You need to hurry, the embryo will not remain viable if you continue to delay.” Rose nodded

and sharply inhaled in an attempt to clear her nose. She couldn't stymie the little seeds of hate

in her heart against Stuce. She hated the place that was giving her food and shelter and

money.

“Will I,” she asked through gritted teeth, her demeanor thorny, “be able to name the child I

give birth to?”

“Whatever you want.”

Trusting Stuge seemed to be a mistake, one that she couldn't revoke or erase.

Rose wiped

her eyes with her free hand, and though her view was fuzzy, she could see that she'd reached

a dead end- the door.

“This is where the procedure will take place. In a month-”

“Josephine, I hope it's not

too much to ask, but could you... Could you come with me?”

Josephine opened the door and walked into the operatory.

“In a month, you will be expected to return for a check up,” finished Josephine.

Doctor Scott Valentine stood beside a gurney in the middle of the harshly lit room, frowning.

“How queer,” thought
Doctor Valentine.

*“Josephine has never led
anybody into the operatory
before.”*

He handed his quivering
patient an orange plastic
clipboard with several
sheets of paper

attached.

“I don’t expect you to read
it all. I haven’t,” he
shrugged. “Just look at the
last sheet, check the box if
you plan on living here, and

sign the bottom line.” Rose
nodded vigorously, her
black

hair bouncing vertically.
The clipboard seemed too
big for her hands.

Soon, the minimally legal
documents were signed, and
Rose lay on the table as
Doctor

Valentine prepared to
anesthetize his patient. She
squinted up at the
unforgiving fluorescent

lights and glanced around the room. She thought about how this place could pass for an

actual doctor's office—unlike the rest of the building that she'd seen, this place was kept

relatively clean. The unmarred white walls were home to cabinets and shelves of instruments

and substances and syringes and tiny glass bottles.

For a moment, she was comforted by the relative normality of the place.

“Hey, Doctor Valentine, if you had a kid, what would you name it?”

The doctor paused a moment- his bright blue eyes had involuntarily filled with water.

“I asked a patient that very question It was a long time ago.

“What did she say?”

Doctor Valentine smiled sadly. “Josie, what would you name a child?”

Josephine stood beside the bed- though her feet were planted on the filthy tiles, she seemed

to be floating purposelessly in the room.

“Cammie,” she replied unhesitatingly.

Rose winced as Doctor Valentine impaled her arm with a syringe of

anesthetic. She hadn't

expected that meant something to stop her from feeling would hurt so much.

“Sorry about that, but here at Stuge, we needed to develop an anesthetic that we could be

sure wouldn't harm the embryo,” he sighed. “So, now I'm asking you. What would you name a

child?”

Rose's eyes felt as though

they were falling shut, and she replied with what she thought

sounded something like “Allie”, as she drifted past the edge of consciousness.

“Good job, Josie,” Doctor Valentine said to his daughter as he put on a surgical mask. For a

moment, he thought he caught the glimmer of a smile in Josephine’s face. He couldn’t be

sure if that's what he saw-
he could never quite be sure
with Josephine. Doctor
Valentine

never thought himself to be
particularly good at
understanding people- he
understood enough

psychology that he could
accurately mimic a doctor
with a caring bedside
manner. Josephine,

to him, she was smoke on
the wind. He always saw
her, but could never catch

her.

Josephine turned to leave,
and shut the door behind
her.

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Josephine sat in a small
dining room with her father.

“Dr. Valentine, would you
pass the spinach please?”

“Certainly, Josie,” replied
Scott Valentine, handing his
daughter the bowl of greens.

“You do realize that you can

just call me ‘Dad’, right?”

“I’m aware of this.”

Dinner for the Valentine family was ordinarily a quiet affair, but driven by the events of the day,

Dr. Valentine couldn’t help but break tradition.

“I think you’ll be happy to know that Rose’s surgery was a success,” he mentioned. Josephine didn’t respond.

“In fact,” he went on, “I bet she appreciated your support. Would you kindly pass the roast beef?”

Josephine acted out in obedience, her bright blue eyes betraying no semblance of either

loyalty or love. Dr. Valentine gave up on conversation with his daughter. She was nothing like

the late Mrs. Valentine.

Mrs. Valentine. Scott couldn't forget his first and only wife- his sole mate. He showed her the

world, and she showed him his heart, a thing he'd long since abandoned in pursuit of his

work. He gazed into the brown thing resembling roast beef on the cheap plastic plate before

him, reminiscing. His wife

died giving birth to their second child- a clone of their first, who had

died. The process was still experimental- mistakes were made.

“Josephine, do you know why we named you Josephine?”

“No,” she replied vacuously.

“It was the name your mother picked- after one of her favorite musicians.”

A few moments passed, and

Josephine finished eating.

“Doctor Bokanovsky will be seeing you tomorrow,” said Josephine. “You asked that I remind you.”

“Thanks, Josie.”

Doctor Valentine was sure, now. He had caught a smile.

Author's Notes

A while before writing

Josephine's Job, I had written a book, *Me Squared*. It stars Hildan Hegenerry, whose parents have had him cloned since they thought he'd be growing up sick. In *Me Squared*, Hildan has turned out healthy, and he and his clone get the chance to form their own little brotherhood- if you'd like to learn more about my book, you can check out mesquaredbook.com for more information.

In *Me Squared*, one of my favorite characters to write

was Josephine- she's strange, mysterious and cold. I wanted to write more about her, so I decided to expand upon her character in this short story, *Josephine's Job*. I also wanted to shed a little more light on how Stuge, the multi-billion dollar medical conglomerate, managed to get surrogates for clones.

I hope you enjoyed this short story- if you have, I'd like to encourage you to take a look at my book, *Me Squared*. There's more

cloning, more bioethics, and plenty of adventure to be had!

Thank you for reading my story.

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Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my friends and family for the fantastic names they gave me as options for the various women in *Josephine's Job*. You guys are now part of the story! I'd also like to

thank Racehard, as he'd like to be known, for his part in helping me edit my story- his feedback has helped me mold the story and give it a better sense of direction.