

A Better Solution

T. E. Killian

Chapter One

Sue Ann Vickers was tired. Tired of standing. Tired of listening to one little old lady after another as she fixed their hair almost the same way every time. She was just plain tired. But most of all, she was bored!

It was the same ole same ole every day. She even had to work Saturdays too. It did help a little that she was able to close the shop on Mondays though, but not enough. She was still bored with her job, bored with her home, bored with this little town, and just plain bored with her life in general.

The door opened as she finished with what she had hoped was her last customer of the day. Not another one! If it was, she was afraid she might just run screaming out the back door.

But when she turned toward the door to see who it was, she was pleasantly surprised. She didn't see another blue-haired old lady. She saw her best friend since forever, Mary Jo Early . . . no, Turner now. Sue Ann was still having trouble getting used to the fact that Jo Jo had married the new preacher in town.

Sue Ann finished at the register with her customer and turned toward her friend who was beaming at her from one of the chairs that were against the wall for customers as they waited their turn in the styling chairs.

Jo motioned toward the other styling chair and said, "Still haven't found anybody to replace Cindy Lou?"

Sue Ann almost fell into the chair next to Jo and said, "No, I thought I had one the other day, but she didn't think she'd make enough money here in Crowleyville to make it worth the move." She paused and frowned. "So she decided to stay where she was in Springfield."

Jo leaned back and rested her head against the wall. "I don't know if this town could stand very many more people moving here from the city."

Sue Ann laughed loudly at her little friend. "Jo Jo . . . where would you be if Gil hadn't come here from St. Louis to be the preacher at our church?"

Jo giggled. "I guess you're right, Sue Ann, but there have been so many people moving in around here." A twinkle came into her eyes, "And besides, Gil is different. He didn't come here to try to change Crowleyville like the others all seem to be wanting to do. He was the one who changed. You have to admit that he's just like one of us who grew up here now. He even drives a Jeep."

Sue Ann laughed with Jo but didn't feel like teasing her any more so she said, "I guess you're right. I have to admit that even though I didn't think so for a long time, Gil did turn out to be a half-way decent kind of guy."

They laughed at that as they both remembered Sue Ann's first encounter with Jo's husband to be. She had come oh so close to shaving his head when he came in for a haircut.

Sue Ann pushed her body out of the chair and made her way to the door to turn the sign around to "Closed" and lock the door.

When she came back and sat next to Jo again, she took a good look at her friend. People had always called them the odd couple or worse, Mutt and Jeff, because of the drastic differences in them physically and even in personality too. Jo was mostly a quiet person while Sue Ann was not. If she were honest, she had to admit that she was often loud and lively. Sue Ann was five ten and Jo wasn't much over five foot. Jo had dark red hair, brown eyes, and freckles while Sue Ann had blond hair with blue eyes. At least they both had shoulder length hair. There had to be one similarity.

She continued to look at Jo. There was something different about her today. That was when she noticed the almost goofy grin that was spread all over Jo's face.

"All right Jo Jo give. What's making you grin like a baboon? I know it's gotta be something big. Now, give."

Jo continued to grin as she grabbed both of Sue Ann's hands in hers and shouted, "I'm pregnant!"

It took a moment for what Jo said to sink in, then Sue Ann let out a whoop and pulled Jo into a hug. "That's great Jo Jo. I'm so happy for you."

She pulled back a little and looked into Jo's eyes. "Did you tell Gil yet?"

Jo giggled. "I certainly did and he went wild! He's so excited, he's down at the sheriff's office right now telling Floyd and anybody else who gets in his way."

Sue Ann really laughed at that. "Can you imagine that? Who would have ever thought those two could have become such good friends." She snorted. "They're total opposites. And especially after the way Floyd treated Gil when he first came to town."

Jo was wiping tears from her eyes. "Yes, I think it was starting before that, but I know something happened between the two of them when they hiked through the woods to rescue me from Jake Hollis last August."

They both sat back in their chairs for a moment then Jo said, "I know it takes a lot to earn Floyd's respect and I really think that he respects Gil."

Sue Ann snorted again. "Yeah, but that hardheaded fool of a cousin of yours still won't go to church with us."

Jo smiled and said, "No, but I'm sure it won't take too much more to get him there."

Sue Ann groaned this time. "Yeah, that'll be the day. In fact, the day he goes through the front door of that church is going to be the day that I go out the back door."

Jo frowned at that. "Sue Ann, why do you and Floyd fight so much? If you would both just stop and think about it, you'd realize that you really do care for each other."

That made Sue Ann shake her head in disgust. "You don't know all the things that have happened between us, Jo. Every time I turn around he's there telling me what I should be doing and what I shouldn't be doing. I can't stand that. So the best thing for both of us to do is to stay far away from each other."

Sue Ann wasn't sure if Jo was going to give up on that topic of discussion or not so she changed the subject back to something happier.

"Well, have you two come up with any names yet?"

Jo smiled a wistful smile. "No, we decided that we'd both think up a list separately then we're going to go over them together later."

"Do I get to throw any names into the hat, Jo Jo?"

Jo laughed and said, "Of course you can, but you have to remember that the final decision will be mine and Gil's, okay?"

Sue Ann didn't respond, she just thought about the fact that her best friend was finally going to have a family. It was terrific.

Jo looked at Sue Ann with another frown on her face. "Sue Ann, Gil asked me the other night when and why you started calling me Jo Jo, and you know, I couldn't for the life of me remember. Do you?"

Sue Ann giggled. "Of course I do, I don't know why you don't."

When Jo gave her a puzzled look she said, “Remember that time when we were riding our bikes? We must have been about six or seven. Well, we ran into each other and I bumped my head on a tree.”

Jo thought for a moment. “Yes, I think I remember that.”

“Well, when I looked up at you hovering over me asking me if I was okay, I was seeing double and I said there were two Jo’s looking at me. And that was when I started calling you Jo Jo.”

Their laughter was interrupted by a knock on the door. Sue Ann looked up to see her son, Andy, on the other side frowning at her. She jumped up and let him in.

The seven-year-old tornado blew in and started to jump into Jo’s lap but Sue Ann stopped him with an arm wrapped around his waist.

“No, Andy, you have to be careful with Jo Jo now.”

The sandy-haired boy looked up at her and said, “Why? Is she sick?”

The women looked at each other and Jo smiled down at Andy and said, “No, I’m not sick Andy. I’m going to have a baby.”

Andy frowned, looked up at his mother, and said, “Oh, like Billy’s mother did?”

“Yes.”

He looked back at Jo and said, “Will I get to hold it?”

* * *

Floyd McCracken was ready to call it a day and go home. Home? It was just a tiny two bedroom apartment. Home to what? He didn’t even have a pet there to keep him company.

He thought about Gil busting into his office a little while ago shouting that Jo was pregnant. Of course, he was happy for his little cousin and Gil too, but there was just something that had been bothering him ever since Gil had made his happy announcement.

Then it hit him like a ton on bricks. He envied his little cousin. Granted, she had been through an awful lot, especially eight years ago when she’d been attacked but now she was truly happy. She was out from under the bar and grill she’d inherited and hadn’t been able to sell until it burned down. She was married to a good man, at least Floyd thought so . . . now. And to top it all off, she was going to have a baby. Instant family.

Family? What did Floyd have? Sure, his parents had a farm about twenty miles away and he had two brothers and a sister in the area too. But he didn’t really spend much time with any of them anymore. After all, they all had families of their own. He always felt like a fifth wheel around any of them. And now he was just starting to feel that way around Jo and Gil too. He shook his head. The baby would only make it worse.

Before he went home for the day, he decided to go out and patrol for an hour or so. He stepped into the restroom to wash his face to wipe away the drowsiness that had settled over him while sitting at his desk.

He looked into the mirror and didn’t like what he saw. There was a middle-aged man staring back at him. Sure, he was only thirty-six but that was too close. He thought he saw a few gray hairs in the midst of his short, dark red hair. He never did like all those freckles and now they just made him look even older.

He just needed to get away and be by himself to think. Everything seemed to be closing in on here.

After spending that hour just driving around the county, he was ready to go home.

When he pulled off the road to turn around and head back to Crowleyville, a motorcycle came flying past him. He flipped his radar on and it read ninety-six. Well, he figured that was certainly good to go in a sixty-five mile an hour zone.

He pulled out, turned on his lights, and put his foot to the floor to try to catch up with the guy. Just as he was calling it in, he remembered an ATL that dispatch had broadcast earlier. Springfield PD was attempting to locate a motorcycle that had been heading east.

As he managed to get close enough to describe the vehicle, dispatch confirmed that he was indeed pursuing the ATL vehicle from Springfield.

Through dispatch, he learned that Hal Lewis, his chief deputy was heading toward them and had stopped to set up a roadblock about a mile up the road. Floyd sure hoped this guy would stop. He didn't want to have to pick up the pieces. He'd done that too many times over the years with these crotch rockets.

By the time they reached the roadblock, another unit was there and one coming up behind Floyd about two miles back. Well, they should have enough people to get the job done, if only the guy would stop.

Floyd watched the motorcycle stop about a hundred yards from the roadblock. As Floyd was approaching, the guy jumped off the bike and took off running through the woods. Not what Floyd wanted to see. Not what Floyd wanted to do at the end of the day. He was too tired for this.

Cussing all the way, Floyd grabbed his AR and jumped out of the Tahoe, slinging the rifle over his shoulder as he began running through the woods after the guy.

Just as he reached the edge of the woods, he saw the guy trip and fall about fifty yards ahead of him. He thought that if he ran as fast as he could, he might be able to catch the guy before he made it very much farther.

The guy was up and running again, and Floyd could see that he was out of shape because he seemed to be slowing down.

Just as Floyd caught up with him and was leaping at him to tackle him, the guy turned and he had a gun in his hand.

Floyd hit the guy in his midsection with his head and shoulders just as the gun went off. Floyd's superior size paid off for him this time. He was at least six inches taller and fifty pounds heavier than the suspect.

They hit the ground with Floyd on top and he could see that the guy's breath had been knocked out of him as the gun flew away from them. Floyd flipped him over onto his stomach, pulled his hands behind him, and hooked him up with handcuffs before the guy could even catch his breath.

Floyd looked up to see his Chief Deputy and good friend, Hal Lewis standing there holding the guy's gun.

He smiled at Hal and said, "I missed part of that ATL. What did SPD want this guy for?"

Hal pushed his hat up out of his eyes and a big grin appeared on his face as he said, "Suspicion of murdering his ex-wife." Then he slapped Floyd on the back and added, "They also said he was armed and dangerous."

Floyd snorted. "I guess I'd better pay a little better attention to those ATLs from now on, huh?"

They laughed together.

By then, the other two deputies had come up next to Floyd as he stood and said, "Here boys take this guy in. We'll be holding him for SPD."

When the deputies began half-dragging the guy toward the road, Floyd turned to his friend. Hal was ten years older than Floyd but they'd become good friends over the years. Hal had trained Floyd when he was a new deputy more than ten years ago, then they'd been detectives together for a few years before Floyd's uncle,

the sheriff then, had died of a heart attack. The county supervisors had appointed Floyd as interim sheriff until the next election, which Floyd won.

Hal had always said he never wanted to be sheriff, just too many headaches for him. He seemed to be quite content to be Floyd's chief deputy and stay out of the limelight that seemed to follow Floyd around too much of the time lately.

"Hal, did Betty tell you that Jo's pregnant?"

Hal laughed and said, "You know that woman knows everything that happens around that church, and sometimes before it even happens."

They both laughed and Floyd said, "If anybody ever deserved happiness, it would be that little woman." He took his cowboy type hat off and ran his fingers through his hair. "I've watched out for her most of her life. Guess I didn't do such a good job of it that one time eight years ago though."

He slammed his hat back on his head. "But now, she's got that preacher boy to watch out for her."

Just when Hal opened his mouth to object, Floyd added, "And I think he's doing a good job of it too."

When they reached the highway, Hal hopped into his vehicle and drove off leaving Floyd alone again.

Alone again! That seemed to be his story lately. He headed home to an empty apartment.

That was how his day ended, but his evening was just starting.

* * *

As soon as Sue Ann and Andy walked into their house, they headed to their separate bedrooms. She always took a quick shower to try to wash off all the chemicals that she was exposed to daily at the shop.

When she stepped out of the shower, she looked into the mirror. She didn't like what she saw. There was a tired face looking back at her that was much too pale, even for her blond hair. Her blue eyes looked kind of faded right now too.

Where had all the zest for life gone that she used to have? That thought and others similar were still floating around in her mind when she joined her mother and Andy in the kitchen for supper.

Her mother had just come to live with Sue Ann and Andy about three months ago. It had been about a month after Sue Ann's dad had died from a long bout with cancer. Her mother had been totally lost for a while but then Sue Ann had been able to talk her into coming to live with them. So far, it seemed to be working out for all three of them.

Sue Ann knew it was working out for her at least. She now had a built-in baby sitter and housekeeper. That hadn't really been part of the original agreement when Wanda Curtis had moved in with her daughter and grandson. Wanda had planned to get a job but that hadn't happened and they'd all just settled into the arrangement as it had turned out.

Andy sure seemed to love having the extra attention that his grandmother gave him. The two of them had grown so much closer in those three months.

Now, Sue Ann sat down at the table with the only family she had left. Both of her parents had been only children, so there was no one else. She had always missed having cousins like Jo had. She figured that was why she'd latched onto Jo at such an early age. She'd always enjoyed going with Jo to visit her relatives scattered all around the county.

Sue Ann's mother was just an older version of her only a little shorter and with her blond hair losing its luster as it was beginning to turn gray.

Wanda looked into her daughter's eyes and said, "What's the matter Hon? You look more than just tired tonight."

Sue Ann looked over at her son. Andy was so much like her with his light complexion and blond hair that her ex-husband had, more than once, questioned whether or not he was the father. But she knew better. She wasn't the one who'd played around.

Andy was her pride and joy. He was big for seven. After all, his father was six four and she was five ten. What else could he be but tall?

Making sure Andy wasn't looking, she looked back at her mother and shook her head slightly. She was relieved when Wanda seemed to get the message that Sue Ann didn't want to talk about it in front of Andy. But she also knew her mother would corner her after Andy went to bed.

That was when she noticed that her mother seemed to be rather upset about something herself. Sue Ann decided that after Andy went to bed there would be a two-way mother daughter talk for sure.

At nine o'clock, after she was certain that Andy was asleep, Sue Ann sat down at the kitchen table across from her mother.

"Okay, Mom, what's up?"

Her mother didn't say a word. She just stepped over to a cabinet, opened it, and pulled a large brown envelope out. Still without a word, she handed it to Sue Ann.

As soon as the envelope was in her hands, they began to tremble. The return address was that of the court in Springfield. She knew it wasn't going to be good news. It never had been when she'd received a letter from that court.

Her hands were shaking so badly that she couldn't open the envelope, so Wanda reached out to take it, opened it, and then handed it back to Sue Ann.

When she finally pulled the letter out and looked down at it, her worst fears were on that page.

Wanda placed her hand on Sue Ann's arm. "What is it Hon?"

"Ray's going to try to take Andy away from me again."

She dropped the papers to the table and Wanda grabbed them and began to read them.

"It says here that the court date isn't until March tenth. She turned to look at the calendar on the wall behind her. "That's still six weeks away. You have to get ahold of your lawyer right away tomorrow and get him started working on it."

Sue Ann could only nod her head. She couldn't talk past the lump in her throat. There was no way she would ever let Ray have Andy.

Wanda shook the papers in the air between them. "It says here that he's claiming he can give Andy a better, more rounded home life with both a father and a step-mother."

That surprised Sue Ann. "Let me see that."

She grabbed the papers and read them all the way through this time. When she finished, she dropped them to the table again. "I didn't know he was getting married again. Andy hasn't said anything about it."

Wanda leaned across the table and wrapped her fingers around both of Sue Ann's wrists. "You don't still have feelings for that snake . . . do you?"

Sue Ann shook her head violently. “No way. I could never take him back after the way he was cheating on me and with more than one woman.”

“Good.” Wanda sat back in her chair and crossed her arms. “Well that miserable excuse for a man is never going to get my grandson. We’ll fight him all the way.”

Sue Ann laid her head down on her hands and began to sob softly. Her worst nightmare might be coming true but what could she do about it? A boy like Andy did need a mother and a father, not just two women. Was that how the judge would see it? Would they take Andy away from her?

When she went to bed, she lay there looking up at the ceiling with the light on for almost an hour. She had to think of a way that she could convince the judge that she was still a better choice to raise Andy than Ray. But how?

* * *

Floyd finished the hamburgers he’d picked up on his way home and sat down in his tiny living room. He didn’t know what else to do, so he turned on the TV and sat there without really watching it. He knew he’d probably fall asleep in front of the tube again tonight before he finally dragged himself off to bed.

He glanced at the book sitting on the coffee table in front of him. He didn’t really like to read. He’d picked the novel up in the grocery store the other day out of desperation for something different to do for a change. That hadn’t worked very well either. Every time he picked it up to read, it put him to sleep faster than the TV did.

Sure enough, he was starting to doze when his doorbell rang. He stood and mentally shook himself in an attempt to clear his foggy mind as he turned the TV off. When he looked through the peephole, he saw a very prim and proper middle-aged woman with gray hair in a bun, dressed in a very conservative gray suit.

He stepped back and opened the door. As soon as he did, he looked down and sure enough, she was carrying a briefcase. After being in law enforcement for as long as he had, he could spot a social worker a mile away. But what would one be doing knocking on his door at seven o’clock in the evening?

The woman cleared her throat and said, “Are you Floyd Ray McCracken?”

He stepped back to let her in and said, “Yes, I am. What can I do for you ma’am?”

“I am Miranda Watkins with the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children’s Division.”

She looked around the living room at Floyd’s overstuffed black leather furniture and pointed with a nod of her head. “Could we make ourselves comfortable, Mr. McCracken? What I have to say to you may be better received while sitting down.”

Now, Floyd was really confused. She apparently had the right place and it was obviously him that she wanted to talk to. But what in the world would a social worker be wanting to talk to him about, especially if he needed to sit down to hear it? Children’s Services? Why would they want to talk to him? He was a bachelor after all.

Once she was seated on the couch across from Floyd’s armchair, she opened her briefcase on the seat beside her and pulled some papers out of the case. She placed the papers in her lap and looked up at him again while he was still trying to get a handle on just what in the world was going on here.

Floyd was not about to ask her again what this was all about. He'd worked with enough social workers over the years to know that they sometimes liked to make the people they were dealing with squirm a little before they lowered the boom on them.

Was that what she was going to do, lower the boom on him? She did want him sitting down first. But what could she possibly have to say to him that he couldn't take standing up?

The woman finally cleared her throat again and said, "You were, at one time, married to Darcy Decker?"

"Yes."

Sure, he'd been married to Darcy but she'd dumped him eleven years ago. The divorce had even been final for a long time now. And they never had any kids.

She let her last question settle for a moment before she looked at him sharply. Then after another pause said, "You have no idea why I'm here this evening do you Mr. McCracken?"

It was starting to bother Floyd that she kept calling him Mr. McCracken. Nobody'd called him that since he'd been sheriff. In fact, it just plain didn't sound right. After all, Mr. McCracken was his dad, not him.

Then he started to get mad at the way she was dragging this whole thing out. Either she didn't want to tell him or she was enjoying it. One look at her almost pinched expression made him think it was the latter.

When he simply shook his head she continued, "Do you know that you have a daughter, Mr. McCracken?"

Floyd was sure you could have knocked him over with a feather. That couldn't be possible. Could it? The look he gave her must have given her the answer she needed.

"Darcy Decker, she reverted to her maiden name after the divorce, gave birth to a baby girl, it seems, shortly before your divorce was final. She was living in the Kansas City area at the time."

Floyd was still so much in shock that he couldn't think, much less utter a single word.

That was when the woman smiled, or was it a smirk? And the urge to hit a woman was stronger than he'd ever had. The woman was enjoying this whole catastrophe and at his expense too.

"Ms. Decker died in a car accident two weeks ago and it took us this long to determine who the next of kin may be. It appears that you may be the father, Mr. McCracken."

When he didn't . . . couldn't say anything, she said, "Now, Mr. McCracken, I want you to think about my next question very carefully before you answer it."

When he just stared at her, she continued. "If it turns out that you actually are the father of Penelope Sue Decker . . ."

She paused and he knew for sure now that she was enjoying all of this, again at his expense.

"If it is proven that she is your biological daughter, will it be your desire to be awarded legal custody of her?"

Floyd continued to stare at her smirking face until what she had just said sunk in. Did he want her? Something changed inside his mind. Yes! If she truly was his daughter, you bet he wanted her.

When he started to speak, he had to clear his throat first. "Yes, I do want her . . . if she really is my daughter."

The smile or smirk grew as she lay what looked like a three part form on the coffee table between them and he picked it up.

"That is an order for DNA testing to be done on you. The lab already has a sample from Penelope. Once you give them yours, they will determine if you actually are her biological father."

She sat back as if to let that sink in then pointed at the form he held and said, “All you have to do is go to that lab in Springfield tomorrow before noon, and we’ll have the results the next morning, Wednesday.”

She seemed to be waiting for him to say something but he couldn’t even think much less speak.

“At that time, if the test is positive, the court has already determined that upon my recommendation you will be awarded temporary custody of her for ninety days.”

She paused as if to let that sink in. She also seemed to be measuring him in some way. By the look on her face, he was sure he wasn’t measuring up to what she expected.

“I will call you as soon as we receive the test results and at that time we will set a time for me to bring Penelope here.”

She paused again. But this time, Floyd interrupted her little game. “How soon will you be able to bring her here?”

“If the test is positive and you are available, I should be able to have her here by two o’clock tomorrow afternoon.”

When he didn’t comment but merely nodded his consent, she continued, “During that initial ninety day time period, we will monitor the situation. That will, of course, consist of two scheduled home visits and one unscheduled visit. At the end of that time, we will make our report to the court. Then the court will decide on permanent custody.”

Again, she seemed to be waiting for him to say something and when he didn’t, again, she said, “Do you have any questions, Mr. McCracken?”

When all he could do was shake his head, she said, “Is this all clear to you then?”

Again, he could only nod his head. Real intelligent looking McCracken.

She closed her briefcase, rose, and said, “May I do a quick inspection of this apartment to determine its suitability for a little girl?”

He figured he’d better say something this time. “Sure, go right ahead.”

She did a quick walk through the kitchen, bathroom, and each of the bedrooms. When she came back into the living room she said, “This apartment is too small for the long term care of an active little girl Mr. McCracken. Will you be able to secure something more suitable, such as a house with a fenced yard, by the end of the temporary custody?”

Floyd looked around the apartment and tried to visualize him living here with a little girl. Nope! Wouldn’t work at all.

“Yes, Mrs. Watkins. I’ve been thinking about getting something more permanent for quite some time anyway. I’ll get ahold of a realtor tomorrow and start looking.”

“Good. Also, it might save you some possible problems down the road if you would allow us to inspect the home before you purchase it.”

“No problem.”

“Well, in that case, we’ll be in touch. Good evening Mr. McCracken. With that, she let herself out the door while he stood there staring at the open door with his mouth still gaping wide.

Floyd forced his body to move and he walked over to the door and closed it. Then he sat back down in his chair. All he could do was just stare into space for at least ten minutes. Now that the social worker was gone, everything she’d just told him began to sink in. Collapse on him was more like it.

He may have a daughter! Him? What did the woman say her name was? Penelope! He had to chuckle in spite of himself. What a name for a kid. Maybe she goes by Penny. Then it dawned on him that the social worker hadn't even told him how old the kid was.

He did some quick calculating. First, he had to remember when the divorce had been final. She'd said that the kid was born shortly before that. Oh yeah, that would have been . . . nine years ago. Then the kid must be around nine.

He had a nine-year-old daughter and he'd never known it until just a half hour ago. Wait a minute. They wouldn't know for sure until the DNA test results were back. But as he thought about it though, Floyd didn't need to know the test results. Suddenly, something deep inside of him told him that Penny was his daughter. He couldn't have explained that feeling even to himself but he knew it deep down. He just knew it.

Jo! He needed to call Jo. He was still closer to her than he was to anyone else in his family.

As soon as Jo answered the phone, Floyd said, "Are you sitting down Little Bit?"

Her voice showed surprise. "Yes, I am. What's this all about Floyd?"

"Little Bit, I just found out that Darcy had a baby girl nine months after the last time I was with her."

It was totally silent on the other end for a long moment then Jo let out a whoop and said, "Oh Floyd that's wonderful news."

Then he waited for it to sink in a little more.

"But how did you find out? Will Darcy let you go see her? How old is she? What's her name?"

"Whoa, Little Bit. Let me answer one question at a time. First, a social worker was here just a little while ago and she said Darcy died in a car accident up by Kansas City a couple of weeks ago and they've just now found me to tell me."

"Okay, then what's her name?"

"The social worker said her name was Penelope."

"Oh what a pretty name and I'll bet she goes by Penny. That's just so sweet, Floyd."

Floyd told Jo everything the social worker had told him and her excitement didn't lessen even after he told her about the DNA test.

"Oh Floyd, I just know that she's your daughter. Just think. You're a daddy."

They hung up shortly afterward and Floyd went to bed with little girls, social workers, and ex-wives on his mind. Needless to say, he didn't sleep very much that night and it certainly wasn't because of boredom this time.