

AN AB DISCOVERY BOOK



Baby Steve

CHARLOTTE DOLLY

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Charlotte Dolly

First Published 2026

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Title: Baby Steve

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Editor: Michael Bent, Rosalie Bent

Publisher: AB Discovery

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Chapter One: The Holiday Without Direction

Steve had been told repeatedly that this holiday was a *reward*.

“You’ve earned it,” his aunt had said at the airport, squeezing his shoulder with the enthusiasm of someone who already knew what came next in life. “School’s done. Big milestone over.”

Steve nodded, because that was what people did when they were congratulated for finishing something that hadn’t led anywhere yet.

The coastal town was bright in the way tourist places always were with white buildings, loud cafés, sun-bleached footpaths, and families moving in loose clusters with hats and backpacks and purpose. Everyone seemed to know where they were going. Steve did not.

“You alright there?” his uncle asked as they unloaded bags from the car.

“Yeah,” Steve said automatically.

His mother, Karen, watched him for a moment longer than the others. “You don’t have to come out straight away if you’re tired,” she said. “You can rest.”

“I’m not tired,” Steve replied, a bit too quickly.

Karen didn’t argue. She rarely did. She just nodded and went back to organizing keys and bags, as if filing the moment away for later.

That afternoon, Steve escaped. Not in any dramatic sense. There were no slammed doors, no arguments, but simply by walking down the promenade, past the souvenir shops selling the same shell necklaces and sun-faded towels, past families arguing about ice cream flavours and past teenagers his age laughing too loudly, already talking about uni, work, moving out.

He felt oddly out of phase with all of them, like he was wearing the wrong clothes for the day.

He stopped near a small park tucked away from the beach crowds. It was quieter there, shaded by trees, with benches set back

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from a paved path. There was a low fence around part of it, and beyond that...

Steve frowned. At first, he thought he was mistaken. There was a baby stroller. Not unusual in itself, but it was larger than most, sturdier, pushed by a woman who looked relaxed, and unhurried. Inside the stroller sat a boy.

A boy Steve's age... or close enough that Steve felt his stomach tighten.

The boy was small in posture rather than size, reclined slightly, legs padded out in a thick nappy, dressed in what were unmistakably baby clothes. He was wearing a soft pastel romper, socks that didn't quite stay on, a bib with a simple pattern. He had a bottle in his hands and was drinking from it calmly, unselfconsciously.

Steve stopped walking. "Don't stare," he muttered to himself.

But he couldn't help it, not because of shock alone, but because nothing about the scene felt panicked or hidden. No one was rushing. No one was whispering. The boy met Steve's gaze briefly, then looked away again, uninterested.

A second adult, a man, walked alongside the stroller. He leaned down and adjusted the blanket over the boy's legs.

"You comfortable, Ollie?" the man asked.

"Mmh," the boy replied around the bottle, voice soft and unguarded.

Steve's chest felt tight. He sat on a bench, pretending to check his phone, though the screen stayed dark. He told himself he was being ridiculous. There had to be an explanation. Medical. Developmental. Something that put this neatly back into a box.

But then the boy, Ollie, lifted the bottle, frowned, and made a small sound of complaint.

"Empty?" the woman asked. Ollie nodded. "Alright, sweetheart. Let's get you another."

Sweetheart. The word landed somewhere deep and unfamiliar.

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Steve looked away, then back again despite himself. Ollie's face wasn't vacant or confused. It was peaceful. Relaxed. There was no embarrassment in him at all.

A few minutes later, the stroller rolled closer to the bench. The woman noticed Steve then—really noticed him—and offered a polite smile.

“Lovely day,” she said.

“Yeah,” Steve replied. His voice cracked slightly. He cleared his throat. “It is.”

She hesitated, then said, gently, “You can ask, you know.”

Steve blinked. “Ask?”

“You’ve been wondering,” she said, not unkindly. “People usually are.”

“I... er...” Steve swallowed. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to stare.”

“That’s alright.” She rested a hand on the stroller handle. “This is our son, Oliver.”

Ollie glanced up at Steve again, curious now. He smiled faintly.

“How old are you?” Steve asked before he could stop himself.

“Eighteen,” Ollie said, simply.

The word hit Steve like a dropped plate.

“Oh,” Steve said. Then, uselessly, “Me too.”

The man chuckled softly. “Funny how that works.”

Steve laughed, but it came out wrong. “I just... I’ve never seen...”

“Someone living like this?” the woman finished.

Steve nodded.

“It’s not for everyone,” she said. “But it’s right for him.”

Ollie shifted, the nappy crinkling audibly. He didn’t seem to notice... or care.

“You’re not... embarrassed?” Steve asked him, quietly.

Ollie considered the question, then shook his head. “No. Why would I be?”

Steve had no answer.

The woman checked her watch. “Nap time,” she announced.

Ollie perked up. “Story?”

“Maybe later,” she said. “First sleep.”

Ollie accepted this without protest, already relaxing back into the stroller as if the decision had been a relief rather than a disappointment.

Steve watched them go, the stroller rolling away, the family intact and unhurried. He stayed on the bench long after they disappeared from view. For the first time since finishing school, Steve felt something he could name. Not jealousy. Not confusion.

Recognition. And that frightened him far more than shock ever could.

Chapter Two

Steve didn't expect to see them again. That, more than anything, was what made it easy to agree when it happened. They ran into Ollie and his parents the next morning near the same park, the day already warm, the air smelling faintly of sunscreen and coffee. Ollie was in the stroller again, legs padded wide by his nappy, a soft cotton onesie this time with tiny buttons down the front. He had a plush rabbit tucked under one arm and was sucking thoughtfully on a bottle.

Ollie noticed Steve first.

"Hi," he said, lifting one hand in a clumsy little wave.

Steve stopped short. "Oh... hi."

His parents smiled.

"Well," Ollie's mother said, pleasantly surprised, "looks like you've made an impression."

Ollie nodded solemnly. "He didn't laugh."

Steve flushed. "I wouldn't."

"That's good," Ollie said, as if that settled it.

There was a pause, just long enough for Steve to expect the moment to pass, but instead Ollie's father asked, "Are you here with family?"

"Yeah. My mum. And my aunt and uncle."

"Same for us," he said. "We're staying another week. You?"

"About that," Steve replied.

Ollie leaned forward in his stroller. "You can walk with us," he said. Not a question.

His mother glanced at Steve. "If you'd like."

Steve hesitated only a second. "Yeah. I'd like that."

It turned out that Ollie's life had a rhythm to it. Steve learned this slowly, over the days that followed, by walking alongside the stroller, by sitting on blankets while Ollie played, and by being invited casually, without ceremony, into their routine. There was a morning walk. A mid-morning bottle. Playtime in the shade. Lunch for the adults, purée for Ollie. Nap. Afternoon calm. Nothing was rushed.

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“What do you do all day?” Steve asked once, sitting cross-legged on the grass while Ollie stacked soft blocks with intense concentration.

“This,” Ollie replied. Steve waited for more. “And sometimes stories,” Ollie added. “And sometimes Mum sings. And sometimes I nap longer if I’m tired.”

“That’s it?”

Ollie looked up, puzzled. “It’s a lot.”

Steve laughed softly. “Yeah. I guess it is.”

Ollie’s mother watched the exchange from the edge of the blanket. She didn’t interrupt. She seemed to be assessing Steve, not suspiciously, but carefully.

Steve had questions. He tried not to ask them all at once.

“Do you ever want to... you know. Stop?” he asked one afternoon.

Ollie frowned. “Stop what?”

“Being a baby.”

Ollie considered this seriously. “No. I already tried being big. I didn’t like it.”

Steve absorbed that in silence.

Another day, Ollie asked him something instead. “Do you wear nappies?”

Steve nearly choked on his drink. “No.”

“Oh.” Ollie looked curious rather than judgmental. “Did you used to?”

“Yeah. I mean... when I was little.”

“When did you stop wetting the bed?” Ollie asked, plainly.

Steve’s ears burned. He glanced instinctively toward Ollie’s parents, but they weren’t paying attention, or at least, they pretended not to be.

“Fifteen,” Steve said, quietly.

Ollie blinked. “That’s not that long ago.”

“Yeah, I know.”

“Did it make you sad when you had to stop?” Ollie asked.

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Steve opened his mouth, then closed it again. "I didn't really get a choice," he said finally.

Ollie nodded, satisfied with the answer. "I like not having to choose."

That night, Steve lay awake in his hotel bed, staring at the ceiling while the sounds of the town drifted in through the open window. He replayed the days over and over, the calm certainty in Ollie's voice, the way his parents spoke to him, firm but gentle, never apologetic. The way Ollie never seemed to be *performing* babyhood. He simply was. Steve felt pulled in two directions at once. Drawn. And deeply unsettled.

The holiday ended abruptly, as holidays always did. Suitcases were packed. Goodbyes were said. Ollie hugged Steve awkwardly, his arms not quite reaching properly.

"You can come see me again," Ollie said.

Steve smiled. "Maybe."

On the drive home, Steve barely spoke. Karen noticed. She waited until they were unpacked, until the house was quiet again, until it was just the two of them in the kitchen with mugs of tea cooling between their hands.

"You've been quiet since we got back," she said.

Steve stared into his mug. "Mum?"

"Yes?"

"I met someone on the trip."

Karen nodded. "I gathered."

"He's my age," Steve continued. "But he lives as a baby. Full time." Karen didn't react. She didn't interrupt. She waited. "He wears nappies. Has a nursery. Bottle feeds. His parents take care of everything." Steve's voice wavered. "He's... happy."

Karen watched her son carefully now, not with alarm, not with disbelief, but with attention.

"And how did that make you feel?" she asked.

Steve hesitated. "Confused. And... something else."

“Something else?”

“Like I was looking at something I wasn’t supposed to want,” he said. “But I did.”

Karen said nothing. She reached across the table and rested her hand near his, not touching, just close enough to be felt.

“Thank you for telling me,” she said quietly.

Steve looked up. “You’re not mad?”

“No,” she replied. “I’m listening.”

And she was. She did not offer reassurance. She did not dismiss his feelings or label them. She simply watched her son, really watched him, as if seeing him anew. And in that watching, something began to change.

A week later Steve wet his bed by accident. He had been thinking about Ollie constantly and dreaming about it. He was shocked when he wet the bed and told his mother who seemed unsurprised and didn't complain. Steve talked a fair bit to his mum about Ollie and finally his mother asked if he ever wanted the same thing. Steve at first denied it, then cried and admitted that he was still remembering telling Ollie that he stopped wetting the bed but that it wasn't his choice to do so.

Chapter Three

Steve woke to cold. Not the sharp, startled cold of fear, but the slow, sinking realization that something was wrong. He lay still for a moment, staring at the ceiling, his body heavy and confused. Then sensation caught up with thought. The sheets were damp. His pyjamas clung uncomfortably to his legs. His heart began to pound.

“No,” he whispered.

He pushed the covers back with shaking hands. There was no denying it. The bed was wet, clearly, and unmistakably. The smell was faint but present. His stomach twisted with a familiar, long-buried shame. He hadn’t done this in years.

Fifteen, he thought automatically. That was when it stopped. Or rather, when it had been stopped *for* him. Steve sat up, running both hands through his hair. His dreams came back in fragments: Ollie in his cot, Ollie being lifted, Ollie sleepy and safe, someone else deciding what happened next. The dreams hadn’t been sexual or vivid. They’d been *quiet*. Heavy with warmth and permission. He swallowed hard.

For a long moment, he considered hiding it. Stripping the bed. Washing everything before anyone noticed. He was capable of that now. He was eighteen. He was supposed to handle things like this alone. But the thought made his chest ache. Instead, he stood, peeled off the wet pyjamas, wrapped himself in a towel, and went down the hallway. His mother was already awake. Steve knew this because she always was. He hovered in the doorway of the kitchen.

“Mum?”

Karen looked up from her mug. “Morning, love.”

There was no hurry in her voice. No tension.

“I... er...” Steve swallowed. “I wet the bed.”

She studied him for a moment. Not the towel. Not the hallway behind him. *Him*.

“Oh,” she said simply. That was it. No sharp intake of breath. No sigh. No annoyance.

“I’m sorry,” Steve added reflexively.

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Karen stood and crossed the kitchen. She placed a hand lightly on his shoulder. "You don't need to be sorry."

He blinked. "You're not... surprised?"

She considered this. "No," she said.

Steve frowned. "Why?"

"Because you've been carrying a lot since you got back," she replied. "And sometimes the body speaks before the mouth does."

She gestured gently toward the hallway. "Go get dry. I'll help you change the bed."

They didn't talk much that morning. Karen stripped the sheets calmly, efficiently. Beneath them, the plastic mattress protector gleamed faintly in the light.

"I never took it off," she said, almost to herself.

Steve flushed. "I didn't know it was still there."

"I did," she replied.

He didn't know what to do with that.

Over the next few days, he thought the accident would fade into embarrassment. Something to laugh about later, maybe. A fluke. It didn't. Every night, he dreamed. Every morning, the bed was wet. By the fourth night, Steve stopped pretending it was coincidence. By the seventh, he stopped apologizing.

Karen never scolded. Never teased. Each morning, she sat on the edge of his bed while he remained under the covers, the dampness undeniable between them.

"How did it feel?" she asked the first time.

"I don't know," Steve said truthfully.

She accepted that. The second morning, she asked again.

"Still don't know," he replied.

"Alright."

She did not let the question drop forever, though.

One evening, a week after the first accident, they sat together in the lounge. The house was quiet. Steve had his knees pulled up to his chest, barefoot on the couch.

"You've talked about Ollie a lot," Karen said gently.

Steve nodded. "I think about him all the time."

"I can tell." There was a pause. "Steve," she said carefully, "did you ever want what he has?"

Steve shook his head immediately. "No."

The answer came too fast. Karen waited. Steve's breathing grew uneven. His eyes stung. He pressed his lips together, then broke.

"I told him I stopped wetting the bed," he said hoarsely. "And he said it wasn't that long ago. And I said it wasn't my choice to stop."

Karen leaned forward slightly. "Was it?"

Steve shook his head again, tears spilling now. "I didn't want to. Everyone just decided I was done. Like it didn't belong to me anymore."

Karen let that sit. Then she asked, quietly, "Do you want to wet your bed again?"

Steve froze. The question seemed impossible, too big, too exposing. His mouth opened, closed. His fingers twisted into the fabric of his trousers.

"I..." He swallowed. "I think..." He nodded, barely perceptible. "Yes."

Karen's response was immediate and calm. "That's fine."

Steve looked up, startled. "It is?"

"Yes," she said. "Your mattress is protected. You're safe. Nothing bad is happening."

Relief washed over his face so quickly it frightened him.

For the next two weeks, nothing changed, and everything did. Steve wet the bed every night. Every morning, Karen sat beside him and asked the same question.

"How do you feel about it today?"

At first, he said, "I don't know." Then, "It's strange." Then, one morning, after a long pause, "I think I like it."

Karen raised an eyebrow. "Why?"

Steve stared at his hands. "Because it means I don't have to pretend I'm done with things just because I'm supposed to be."

She nodded slowly.

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“That’s an important thing to notice,” she said. She did not push further. But she remembered. And Steve sensed, deep in his chest, that something irreversible had begun, not with a decision, but with permission.

Chapter Four

The weeks settled into a pattern so quietly that Steve barely noticed it forming. Every morning, Karen came into his room after he woke. She sat on the edge of the bed, just as she had from the start, the routine now familiar enough that neither of them commented on it anymore. The sheets were always wet. Sometimes very wet. Sometimes only enough to be undeniable. They never rushed. Karen would pull the covers back slightly, not to shame him, but to acknowledge what had happened.

“Well,” she would say, evenly, “let’s have a look.”

Steve would sit up against the pillows, cheeks warm but no longer burning. They would look together at the darkened fabric, at the spread, at how far it had gone.

“How does it make you feel today?” she would ask.

“I don’t know,” Steve said at first.

Then later, “It feels... familiar.”

And then, after another few mornings, “It feels right when I wake up like this. Like I didn’t have to hold anything back.”

Karen never corrected him. Never praised or discouraged. She listened, occasionally asking a careful follow-up.

“Does it make you anxious?”

“No.”

“Relieved?”

“Yes.”

She took those answers seriously.

One morning, after almost three weeks of this, she lingered longer than usual. Steve noticed it in the way she didn’t stand right away, in the way her fingers rested thoughtfully on the edge of the mattress.

“Steve,” she said, “can I ask you something a bit bigger?”

He nodded. “Okay.”

“Would you like to wear nappies to bed?” she asked. “So you don’t have to worry about the sheets at all. And perhaps... during the day, if you wanted.”

The words landed heavily. Steve stared at her.

"I... er... what?" he said, half-laughing, half-panicked.

Karen remained calm. "You don't have to answer straight away."

Steve's heart was pounding. His mind was already too full.

"I didn't think..." He stopped, swallowed. "I mean, I didn't know you'd even consider that."

She tilted her head slightly. "You've been living with this for weeks now. It seemed worth asking."

Steve pressed his hands into the blanket. "I've been dreaming about them," he admitted suddenly.

Karen's eyebrows rose, just a little. "Nappies?"

"Yes," Steve said, embarrassed now that the word was out loud. "A lot. I didn't want to say because I thought it would sound weird."

Karen considered him carefully. "Dreams are usually honest," she said. "What kind?"

Steve hesitated. Then, quietly, "Like Ollie's."

That caught her attention.

"What kind did Ollie wear?" she asked.

Steve answered without thinking, and only realized how much he knew when the words kept coming.

"Thick cloth ones at night," he said. "Pinned. Terry squares. With plastic pants over the top. During the day sometimes disposables, but not plain white ones. Nursery prints. Animals. He said the plain ones made him feel too grown-up."

Karen stared at him for a moment, genuinely surprised.

"You noticed all that?" she asked.

Steve flushed. "I didn't mean to. I just... did."

She nodded slowly. "Alright."

He looked up sharply. "Alright?"

"I'll get the same," she said. "We'll see how you feel about it."

She didn't bring them out straight away.

Two nights passed. Then three. Steve wondered if she'd changed her mind, and the thought made his chest ache more than

he expected. On the fourth night, Karen came into his room just before bed carrying a small stack of folded white fabric.

“Come here,” she said.

Steve sat up.

She placed a thick terry square on the bed. “This is what Ollie wears at night.”

Steve stared at it, breath shallow.

“I want you to try putting it on,” Karen said calmly. “See how it feels.”

She left the room without another word. Steve picked up the fabric. It was heavier than he expected. Rougher. He unfolded it, then refolded it, hands clumsy, heart racing. He tried to remember. Had Ollie shown him? Had he seen it done?

Ten minutes passed. Karen returned. Steve was sitting on the bed, naked from the waist down, the nappy lying uselessly beside him. His face was crumpled. Tears ran silently down his cheeks.

“Oh,” Karen said softly.

“I don’t know how,” he choked. “And I don’t want to do it wrong. And I... I want you to.”

She didn’t hesitate.

“Lie back,” she said gently.

Steve obeyed immediately.

Karen worked methodically. She powdered him carefully, the scent clean and unmistakably childlike. She lifted his hips, slid the thick fabric into place, folded it snugly, pinned it with practiced precision. Then came the plastic pants, pulled up firmly, sealing everything in. Steve lay still the entire time, shaking slightly.

“There,” she said at last. “All done.”

He reached down tentatively, touching the bulk between his legs.

“It’s... a lot,” he whispered.

Karen nodded. “Night nappies usually are.”

He slept deeply. In the morning, the nappy was heavy and soaked. Steve swung his legs out of bed and laughed softly when he felt the weight shift. At breakfast, he padded into the kitchen still

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wearing it, hidden beneath loose pyjamas. He was smiling openly, unguardedly.

“I’m really wet,” he said, not embarrassed at all.

Karen watched him over the rim of her mug.

“Yes,” she said. “You are.”

And as she took in his ease, his brightness, the way his shoulders no longer held tension, she understood something important.

This wasn’t an experiment.

It was a beginning.

Karen instinctively knew that a new path had been taken and she was determined to help her now-nappied son along that path. Unknown to Steve, she had kept the phone number of Ollie and his parents and made a long and constructive phone call about how Ollie lived. She found out where to get baby clothes, larger dummies, even how to bottle feed. She found out about adult-size cribs, strollers and other baby paraphernalia.

She intended simply to keep her options open regarding Steve’s delight in nappies, but deep down she knew that baby clothes and an end to his day and night toilet training was inevitable and she determined she would be there for him.

When she saw Steve’s absolute delight at being in soaking pee-wet nappies she knew that he was... just a baby.

Her baby.

Baby Steve.