

Stem Cell Steve

By Jack Hall

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CHARACTERS

Announcer

Doctor

Mr. Brown – Patient

Steve – A blob of tissue that looks remarkably human

Author's Note: This skit was written in direct response to the issue of embryonic stem cell research, not stem cell research in general. Embryonic stem cell research, like cloning and human/animal chimeras, is a barbaric "science" only a Nazi could love. On the other hand, adult stem cells, which can be found throughout the human body, may very well lead to a number of scientific breakthroughs in the future without any loss of life. If you choose to perform this skit, we kindly ask that you agree to draw a distinction between embryonic stem cells (bad!) and adult stem cells (good!). If, however, your agenda is to ignorantly condemn all stem cell research, then please go away and write your own skit. Thank you.

The setting is a doctor's office, 2051. This can be video taped like a TV promo, or performed live. The Announcer's line may be left out if desired. The Doctor and Mr. Brown are in the office at rise.

ANNOUNCER: The following is a message from the National Stem Cell Research Center.

DOCTOR: Well, Mr. Brown, I have your test results back. Looks like you need a heart transplant.

BROWN: A heart transplant? But Doc, I can't afford to be off from work. I have a family to take care of, and a business to run.

DOCTOR: Not to worry, Mr. Brown. Here in the year 2051, a heart transplant is no more difficult than freezing a wart off your foot. You'll be in and out in a day.

BROWN: But Doc, won't I have to wait on a long list for a donor organ?

DOCTOR: Not at all, Mr. Brown. We'll have a new heart in your chest before the afternoon is over.

BROWN: How is that possible?

DOCTOR: I'll tell you how: embryonic stem cell research.

BROWN: Embryonic stem cell research? What's that?

DOCTOR: It's when doctor's take cells from an undeveloped human fetus and grow it into blobs of tissue useful for medical research and treatment, such as the heart we'll put in your rib cage.

BROWN: Tissue from a fetus? Sounds fishy.

DOCTOR: (*laughs*) You know, back at the turn of the century, a lot of people thought that, primitive thinkers who believed in God, prayer in schools, and thought that fetuses were babies. Thank goodness for you, rational thinking politicians and scientists saved the day and kicked those primitives back to the stone age.

BROWN: Golly!

DOCTOR: Now let's see, you're Type AB negative? Looks like we're going to need Steve. *(calls off)* Steve? Would you step in here, please?

Steve enters.

BROWN: Who are you?

STEVE: I'm Steve.

DOCTOR: Steve here is going to give you his heart. Isn't that great?

BROWN: *(starts to break character)* You're going to give me his heart? Today?

DOC: That's right.

STEVE: Isn't embryonic stem cell technology neat-o?

BROWN: But, you can't take his heart. He's a human being.

STEVE: No I'm not. I'm a blob of tissue, brought to maturity in laboratory conditions and prepared especially to meet your medical need.

BROWN: But if I take your heart, you'll be dead!

STEVE: No I won't. Because I'm not alive right now. I'm just tissue.

BROWN: No you're not! You're a human being!

DOCTOR: Please, Mr. Brown. I promise you Steve is only a mass of stem cells, and not a human being.

STEVE: But if I was, I would have no moral or ethical problem with offing myself so that you can live.

BROWN: You mean you want to die?

DOCTOR: We genetically engineered them that way. Cute, huh?

STEVE: And we stem cells don't refer to it as dying. We like to call it recycling.

BROWN: I don't care what you call it! I won't let you kill this man!

STEVE: He's not going to do anything, sir. I'm going to do it.

BROWN: You?

STEVE: Unless you prefer to do it. I don't mind. Can you handle a .9mm automatic?

BROWN: You're going to shoot yourself?

STEVE: Right between the eyes. It's a lot safer for you than drugs. Don't want to damage the heart.

BROWN: You're insane!

STEVE: If you prefer, I could slit my throat. Do you want to slit my throat? I have a lovely knife.

BROWN: NO!!!

DOCTOR: Please, Mr. Brown, don't get all excited. Remember, you still have a bad heart.

STEVE: That's right. I better hurry up and shoot myself so that you can get back to your lovely wife and kids.

Steve exits.

BROWN: No, please, don't do that! I don't want this guy to die.

DOCTOR: He won't die, Mr. Brown. He's not human.

BROWN: You're... you're sure?

DOCTOR: I have all its documents in my office if you want to review them.

BROWN: I see. *(pause)* Will you at least give him a good burial?

DOCTOR: Of course not. We'll toss the refuse out with the rest of the biological waste.

BROWN: That's what you do?

DOCTOR: We can't just dump it in a landfill, can we?

BROWN: Well, okay then.

DOCTOR: Good. I'll send Nurse Janet in to prep you for surgery. She'll get you fixed up and we'll be under way in—

Sound of a gunshot off stage. The Doctor looks off non-chalantly. Mr. Brown's eyes pop open in horror.

DOCTOR: Sounds like fifteen minutes.

Blackout.