



MARK HENLE/THE REPUBLIC

Heidi Grosser made a solo trip from California to Phoenix to visit Aaron Bell (center), Sid Cuecha and the triplets in April. "It's almost like being an aunt. I get to just have fun with them."

gingerly, and someone places a bundle of blanket in her arms, just a small face under an oxygen tube peeping out. It's Baby A. Caitlin Marie.

"The first time I saw them with their babies, it just made it all worth it," Heidi says.

Now that they're all in the same room, it feels right to Aaron.

Heidi is released from the hospital a few days later, on Tuesday; the babies stay, and their dads, too. Aaron wonders what will happen next. "Are we just going to be done when she checks out of the hospital?"

Caitlin is the first one to be released from the hospital, then Kelsie, then Riley.

As soon as Riley is released, the family drives to Heidi and Jeremy's house. It is packed with Heidi and Jeremy's friends and family — including Heidi's mother.

She smiles at the men and coos over the babies, picking up the first one to cry.

Everyone else is gone by 9. Heidi's mother hugs both men on her way out. Heidi tucks her boys into bed. But the men stay. The four adults sit in the living room for another two hours, talking and

cuddling the babies.

Aaron knows they have to go, back to their hotel and the next day, back home.

No one wants to say goodbye.

Aaron and Sid still are wearing the hospital bands on their wrists. It's been almost three weeks since the babies were born. "I guess we don't need these anymore," Aaron says.

Heidi gets a pair of scissors from the kitchen. Each man holds out his arm, and she cuts through each band.

It feels like she's cutting them loose.

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It's been three years since the babies were born.

Among the four adults, someone texts someone else almost every day. Aaron and Heidi talk on the phone a couple times a week.

"What we went through together, it's not something you just say, 'Well, it was nice seeing you,' and you go your separate ways," Jeremy says. "We feel like we are their family, and I imagine they feel the same way."

Kelsie is still the smallest. The middle child, she wants everything to be fair. At

breakfast, she looks at her brother's plate and then her sister's to make sure everyone got the same.

Sid brushes Caitlin's hair into a half-up, half-down and clips it with a bow.

"Riley, do you want a bow?" Sid asks, smiling. "Nope," Riley says. The boy has a toy car in one hand, an airplane in the other.

Caitlin gives Sid a kiss. The kids call him "Papa" and Aaron "Daddy."

The men are happy about a recent ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in Arizona, though their priority is potty training. Because while marriage would provide legal protections for the couple, after so many years together, it is less about *getting* married and more about *being* married. They have lived as if they were.

Because the children were born in California, where the laws are different, the men are the children's legal parents, both of their names on the birth certificates.

They wear matching gold bands with three diamonds each, one for each child, and etched with the children's birthdate in Roman numerals.

Framed pictures of the Grossers are interspersed with Sid and Aaron's family pictures in their Phoenix home.

"We're part of each other's families now," Sid says.

Sid and Aaron are Facebook friends with Jeremy's mom, Heidi's mom and her sisters. When Heidi's sister got married, she invited Sid and Aaron to the wedding. They visit back and forth and vacationed together in San Diego.

In April, Heidi came alone to Phoenix to visit the dads and the triplets. The children have been waiting for her to arrive, watching out the big front window.

"It's almost like being an aunt," Heidi says. "I get to just have fun with them."

Aaron picks her up at the airport. She arrives with three big suckers, the triplets' first. The kids squeal when they see her.

"Heidi! Heidi! Heidi!" And Heidi laughs and squats down, her arms open wide to hug all three of them at once.

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