

Planned Immortality
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Lacey walked up to the clinic boldly. She had been here many times before and she was used to the scornful eyes that penetrated her. The experience was not a pleasant one, but it was necessary and so she endured it. Besides, she had to do it quickly or it would be too late.

She began to climb the small steps up to the clinic doors. To her right and to her left she saw men and women holding signs and shaking Bibles at her. "You are going to hell!" some of them read and, "Murderers deserve to die!" others read. She shook her head. But out of the corner of her eye, she saw something that she didn't quite know what to think about. A man stood off by himself, holding a sign that read: "God does not hate you." Now that was unusual. The other picketers seemed to be avoiding the man. He did not yell, but simply stood with his sign.

She walked over to the man and he smiled at her.

"So what do you mean by this?" she asked in a somewhat defensive tone. He didn't seem to be the hateful type, but you never knew. The man just grinned and looked at his sign.

"Well, I mean pretty much exactly what the sign says. God does not hate you, and I believe that with every fiber of my being." Lacey snorted.

"But murder goes on in this place," she said sarcastically. The man nodded sadly.

"Yes, I believe that too."

Now she was utterly baffled.

“If you believe that what they do in here is indeed murder, how can you say that God doesn’t hate it?”

“Oh, I am not saying that at all!” said the man earnestly. “I said that God does not hate *you*. What goes on in this place, I believe, is murder. Who can say for sure that it isn’t? Has science proven that they are not humans?” Lacey raised her eyebrow.

“I always assumed—”

“That’s the problem right there, you assumed. The world assumes, science assumes. But there is absolutely no proof that they are not humans. They are quite different from us, yes, but they *are* us. Why would they be any different? They were conceived the same way we were, but we vehemently assert that we are humans and they are not. Where is the proof? We destroy them based on assumption.” Lacey didn’t quite know how to respond. The man saw it on her face and smiled.

“But you asked why, if this is indeed murder, God does not hate you. Well, God does hate the act of murder. But he does not hate the person. God loves everyone, regardless of the things they have done. What if salvation was based on works? If this were true, no one would go to heaven. I have lied, cheated, stolen and done many atrocious things in my day, but I believe that I am saved by the grace of God. Therefore God does not hate you, no matter what you *do*. Does God like murder? Of course not. But I guarantee you that there will be murderers in paradise, for any sin can and has already been

forgiven.” Lacey looked into the eyes of the man, and for the first time in her life, she was uncertain.

“But this is part of our culture,” she said. “This is how we survive.” The man nodded and whispered into her ear.

“That doesn’t make it right.”

A clock nearby chimed five times. She was late for her appointment! Without another word, she turned away and went inside the building. She walked to the counter.

“Ah, Miss Davis,” the secretary said with a smile. “Doctor Johnson is waiting for you. You can go ahead and walk back; you know the way, right?” Lacey Davis smiled.

“Of course I do child, I have been coming here for many years, long before you were born. How is your husband by the way?”

“Oh, he’s doing all right. They removed the cancer from his body fairly easily, and he should be back to work soon. I wish he would get another job though. He has been working with those Ethereal Transporters for thirty years now, and I bet you anything that his cancer was due to the radiation those things let out. Luckily our son got a different job, working night shifts at the Vegetation Generator, and that is a much safer job.” Lacey wished the secretary’s husband the best of luck and then left to find her room.

There it was where it always had been, the same room she had been seen in for the past 122 years. She entered, changed into the white, backless robe

that was waiting for her, and awaited the doctor. She glanced at the pamphlets that littered the room. *Planned Immortality*.

Just then the door opened and the doctor came in.

“Miss Davis! It’s good to see you again,” said the doctor with a smile.

“Hopefully you’ll be able to see me for a few more centuries Dr. Johnson,” Lacey said, and the doctor laughed. He took out his chart and flipped through it.

“So what is this, your third time?” he asked, and Lacey nodded.

“Yes, first when I was 55, and then again when I was 105. I’d say it’s about time for another.”

“Definitely,” said Dr. Johnson. “You know, you do not have to wait until your body gets old to carry out the procedure. Most people get a new one as soon as they get wrinkles and liver spots.”

“I know, but it is an expensive procedure and I can only afford to do it every fifty years or so.”

“Ah, that is quite understandable. Well, are you ready to see our specimens?” Lacey nodded and the doctor opened the door and led her out of the room. They walked down the long, whitewashed hallway that was covered with serene paintings by an unknown artist. At the end was a large metal door, and as they approached it slid open with a hiss.

Before them was a long metal bridge. It was surrounded on either side by glass. The doctor led her into the middle of the bridge and the door slid shut behind them. Lacey looked through the glass. Below her was a large room filled

with hundreds of people. The people were working hard, stacking large bricks and un-stacking them, forever working and accomplishing nothing. The people in the room were singing a new song that Lacey had never heard before:

*“Hey-o! The clones are at work!
Lifting bricks and digging holes,
Can’t you hear our woeful throes?
The sentinels sit in their iron perch
With their stun guns ready if we quit work.
But we don’t care, we sing our songs,
And work and work all the day long.
But in the end we die in shame,
For no great things do we ever attain.
But alive we are now,
with sweat on our brow!
Hey-o! The clones are at work!”*

“Amazing,” said Lacey. “Their songs change every time I come in.”

“Yeah,” said Dr. Johnson with distaste. “It’s sickening really. But it helps them work, so we allow them to sing. This batch has been working for the past 17 years and they are all well toned. You won’t find an inch of fat on these clones and they are very healthy; we make sure of it! We would be out of business if our products were defective. Now let’s see, your clones should be in there somewhere...ah there they are.”

Dr. Johnson pushed a button on a nearby panel. The intercom inside the workroom turned on and the ringing silenced the working clones. Immediately the clones became nervous and some clung to each other in fear. Dr. Johnson called into the intercom in a loud, clear voice.

“Will clones LD09, LD10 and LD11 please enter the tunnel; your time has come. Clones LD09, LD10 and LD11, please enter the tunnel.” All eyes in the room below turned and gazed upon three identical clones that had begun to cry. Three large men in white robes entered the workroom and grasped the wailing clones, dragging them towards the tunnel. As clones LD09, 10 and 11 were taken away, the other clones in the room began to rhythmically clap their hands and stomp their feet as they chanted:

“Goodbye dear friends, your day has come.

You’re the relief of everyone.

Today you die but we live still,

To work all day and tomorrow be killed.

To God you go; give Him our love!

For we will see you soon enough.”

The doors to the workroom shut and the remaining clones went back to work, without song.

“Come,” said the doctor and he led Lacey to the other side of the bridge, down a flight of stairs and into a room at the very end. Lacey was gasping.

“My old bones are not fit for such activity.”

“Don’t worry about it Lacey, we will be fixing that today! Here, sit in this chair. They should be in shortly.” Lacey sat in the chair and Dr. Johnson pressed a button on the wall.

“Bring them in,” he said. A door on the far wall slid open and the three clones were dragged into the room, weeping.

“Be silent!” yelled Dr. Johnson, and he slapped clone LD09 so hard that she fell to the ground. The other two quickly shut up. Dr. Johnson looked at his clipboard.

“We used the same DNA sample that we took from you 122 years ago and have been creating three clones of you every 15 years since then. If you live long enough and the eldest clones live to be thirty, they are destroyed. We wouldn’t want you to be walking around in old bones, for that would defeat the purpose now wouldn’t it?” He laughed.

“We terminated three such clones two years ago, and now these three are the eldest. It has been 17 years since they were created and I must say, they look exactly like you.”

The three sister clones were no longer crying and were now hugging each other tightly.

“Miss Davis, feel free to inspect the clones and choose the body that you wish.” Lacey stood up. She refused to look into the clone’s eyes. She carefully walked around each clone, inspecting every muscle and organ of the body, making sure she was picking the right one. Finally after much thought, she chose.

“This one,” she said, pointing to the one that Dr. Johnson had slapped.

“Ah, LD09, good choice. Very well, enter the operating room to your left and lay down on the table to the right. Someone will be in to attend to you shortly.”

“Actually...” said Lacey slowly, “I want to see what happens to the other two.”

Dr. Johnson blinked.

“Well, Miss Davis, they are terminated of course. Once you choose a body, the other two are not needed and will doubtless be too old by the time you need another one.”

“I know, I know,” said Lacey nodding, “but I want to see what happens to them anyway.”

“Miss Davis, I do not think that—”

“They are my clones Johnson, and I want to see.” Dr. Johnson breathed deeply and exhaled loudly.

“As you wish. Follow me. Darrel,” he said, turning to a guard, “set LD09 up on the table.” Darrel reached for LD09 but she clung fast to her clone sisters, weeping. Finally he wrenched her free and the other guards dragged the remaining two clones away.

“Good-bye my sisters!” cried LD09 in dismay, “I will see you soon!” Darrel took LD09 into the operating room and the door slid shut behind him.

Lacey followed Dr. Johnson and the two remaining clones down another hallway. The guards opened a red metal door to the left. They dragged the no-

longer-resisting clone sisters into the room and roughly tied them to two tables that were positioned side by side.

“No,” said Dr. Johnson as Lacey tried to enter the room too. He stood in her way.

“There is a window over here, we can watch from there.” Lacey nodded in compliance and she and the doctor stood at the window. The guards left the room and the two restrained girls did nothing but gaze at each other. Soon a man in a long black robe and a hood entered the room. He went to a nearby drawer and retrieved a long needle that was filled with a black liquid. First he walked over to clone LD10 and injected her with the liquid. Her sister gazed at her sadly as the doctor went to get a new needle. Soon the injected clone began to twitch and her eyes rolled into the back of her head. Her mouth opened in silent screams and then all at once she became still. Clone LD11 burst into uncontrollable tears and wailed at the top of her lungs.

“I don’t know why you wanted to see this,” said Dr. Johnson disgustedly. “It’s not like they are human or anything.” Lacey had covered her mouth in horror. She had no idea that it was like this. The man in black came with another needle and the remaining clone turned her head. As she was being injected, she met eyes with Lacey through the glass. They held each other’s gaze until the clone’s body began to jerk, and Lacey couldn’t stand it any more. She left the window and walked down the hallway with the doctor following.

“Let’s get this over with,” she said coldly, but her voice trembled. When she entered the operating room, clone LD09 was securely strapped to a table.

Lacey pulled her sagging body up onto the table next to her and stared at the ceiling. Attendants entered and securely fastened her to the table, and all the while she refused to look at the clone next to her.

“All right,” said Dr. Johnson entering the room. “You know the procedure. We will carefully remove your brain and spinal cord and put them into your clone’s body. After the operation you will be weak for a few days as your brain learns how to control a new body, but afterwards you will be able to go home and you will be fifty years younger. The organs in your old body, and those of the clones we just terminated, will be donated to science. Are there any questions?” Lacey shook her head no, still studying the textures on the ceiling. The doctor tied a white mask across his mouth and went to get his tools.

“I don’t hate you.”

Lacey’s eyes went wide. She turned her head and looked at the young girl lying next to her. The clone’s face was tearstained and weary, and a small bruise was forming where the doctor had slapped her, but her eyes were clear and her countenance was resolute. The doctor came by and injected Lacey and the clone with a clear liquid. The clone smiled at her.

“I don’t hate you,” she said again and Lacey began to tremble.

“Why not?” she asked, but the clone just closed her eyes.

“I’ll greet God with a kiss from you,” the clone said.

The lights went dim, colors shattered, and Lacey faded away.

A few days later, Lacey left the clinic. When she got home, she put down her things, locked the doors and went into the bathroom. She gazed into the mirror. She was young again. There wasn't a wrinkle on her face. She had no imperfections, save the remnants of a healing bruise on her cheek. Her body was well toned and muscular. There wasn't an inch of fat on her. But all she could do was look at her eyes. After a while, she reached up and touched the mirror.

"I'm sorry," she said, and tears streamed down her face.