

# clones



ryan somma

c l o n e s



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*“You are the bows from which your children as living  
arrows are sent forth.”*

- Kahlil Gibran, *“The Prophet”*

# f o r e w a r d

Overcome by events.

All science fiction authors fear this eventuality. Kurt Vonnegut once wrote a short story about the first space explorer finding the voices of the dead in orbit around our planet, which is overcome by events. Jules Verne's "*From the Earth to the Moon*," where explorers reach our orbiting friend via a capsule shot from a cannon is overcome by events. The film "*Le Voyage dans la lune*," about a trip to a moon filled with wild aliens and monsters, is now overcome by events.

Yuri Gagarin's first trip into space and Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon rendered all of these fictional works *obsolete*. Actual space flight transformed these works into mere novelty items. Their power to inspire speculation and innovation were lost because we had actually "been there" and "done that."

Within twenty years this book will be overcome by events. The stories I have written will become people's lives, more or less, as first the wealthy and then the middle class are able to clone themselves. Controversies will result, and society will change a little, just as it always does.

That cloning will become a safe medical procedure is inevitable. People can protest all they like and politicians can legislate all they want, but this will manifest itself in our lifetimes, and it simultaneously opens doors to opportunity, understanding, and misuse.

So we better look forward to the good news and prepare for the bad. How will cloning affect the familial architecture? How will clones be viewed in society? Will Cloning Clinics refuse services to certain people the way Fertilization Clinics withhold services to homosexual, physically challenged, and other demographics today? Should people have so much control over their children's designs? We'll see these disputations played out soon enough.

At the same time, what are we going to learn about ourselves from raising cloned children? Today researchers love to work with identical twins because they teach us so much about how our genes versus our environment shape who we are. With clones, we will have the opportunity as individuals to watch ourselves grow up, try to change ourselves, and see what could

have been possible with different opportunities and resources presented us.

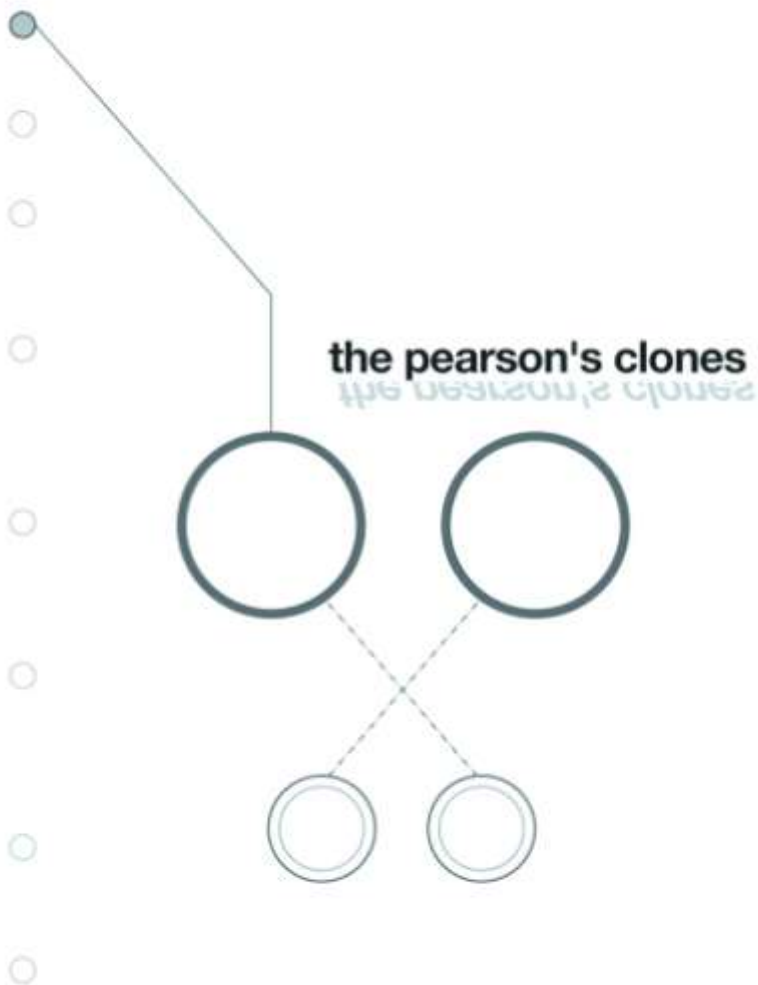
This book is an experiment in speculative fiction. It's an attempt to get people thinking about the possibilities, the positives and the negatives human cloning will bring about in our daily lives. As an experiment, I found in some instances, the children being cloned made a big difference in my characters' social interactions. In other family dynamics, it had almost no impact at all. People are people after all.

Cloning adds another dimension to our social dynamics and family architectures, just as homosexual lifepartnerships, abortion, and genetic engineering change those dynamics. When this book is overcome by events, some of my predictions will come to light, others will be as foolish as riding a bullet to the moon or hearing voices of the dead in space. Only time will tell.

I look forward to finding out.







# the pearson's clones

Our clones knew something was up.

"Mom. Dad," our son, Emo, was saying, "We know something's up."

Joan and I were sitting at one end of the dinner table, holding hands on the table top between us. Emo and our daughter, Alex, sat across from us, holding hands on the table top between them.

"What ever do you mean?" I asked in my best approximation of innocence.

Everyone, even Joan, rolled their eyes at me.

Alex looked at Emo, and Emo looked at me, tilting his head slightly so that he was 'looking down' at me even though he was only 15 and shorter than I, "Okay Dad. See, it's like this. The older we get, the more my sister and I look like you and mom—I mean Joan. Ben Bobb Junior's been joking us every chance he gets since the PTA meeting last month."

"That kid Ben's a juvenile delinquent," I snapped. "Who cares what he thinks? He'll be behind bars the moment he's 18!"

"Bruce," Alex put up her free hand to pause me. She didn't call me 'Dad.' "Please try and stay on the subject."

I looked at Joan and thought her confused expression probably matched my own.

"The kids at the bus stop joke us about it all the time. People give us funny looks when we go out in public as a family," Emo explained. "Alex and I can see them whispering to one another, gossiping."

The more Emo spoke, the more I thought this was sounding rehearsed, *very* rehearsed. "They act as if they know something scandalous about our family, some kind of inside joke. It's like when dad jokes someone for wearing a bad toupee."

"Or Mom knocks someone's breast implants," Alex added.

Emo nodded, "It's like everyone in the world thinks you're trying to pull a fast one. It's like you think you're really clever, but everyone sees the obvious."

Emo paused dramatically.

"We're clones of you two, aren't we?" his tone did not make it a question.

Joan smiled and tried to laugh lightly, but it came out strained, “That’s silly dears. Lot’s of people have a family resemblance. There’s nothing odd about that. You’re just imagining things.”

*Good cover*, I thought and squeezed my wife’s hand reassuringly.

She shot me a warning glare that read, *Don’t do anything stupid*.

“We present to you Exhibit A,” Emo announced, and Alex brought a thick book out from under the table to drop it before us with a dramatic *whomp*. Joan and I exchanged looks of concerned confusion.

It was a photo album.

“Do you recognize this?” Alex asked.

Joan nodded numbly, “It’s your father’s and my photo album, the combined pictures from our childhoods.”

“Correct,” Emo said with a single nod. With one hand he flipped the book open to the first page he had marked with a yellow post-it note. I counted a dozen other yellow tabs throughout the book. Emo stood up and leaned over the table to address us.

“Look familiar?” his fingertip pressed white on the photograph of myself at his age, but he was staring at Joan.

“I...” Joan hesitated and looked to me for guidance.

I just looked at Emo, nodding my head sagely, “I get it.”

“So you see it,” Emo pressed.

I continued nodding slowly, narrowing my eyes at him, “You’ve made your point. You look a lot like me at that age. Lots of kids bare a resemblance to their parents. It’s called heredity, you—“

“No Dad,” Emo’s finger came up and down on the picture and Alex rolled her eyes. “We covered that. Look at the photograph and look at me, you too Joan.”

My wife and I leaned over the table to stare at the picture. I had no idea what the boy was talking about. It was probably something in his imagination anyway. The kid was always a little conspiracy prone for his age--.

“I see it,” Joan said at last. “Bruce was wearing the same outfit you are now Emo.”

Emo put his finger right on his nose and nodded, “The outfit you bought me Joan.”

Joan nodded silently.

Now it was Alex's turn to flip the page, directing my attention to a picture of Joan as a teenager, "Care to comment Bruce?"

"Okay," I shrugged. "It bares a strikingly and purely coincidental resemblance to the polka-dot dress I bought you last year for your birthday."

Alex frowned. "The dress I'm wearing now." She pinched the fabric and pulled it away from her sleeve towards me to emphasize this point.

My brow scrunched at it, "Yeah. That one."

"Do you two see us as dolls?" this was Emo, who raised one eyebrow accusingly.

Joan made to speak, but I interrupted her, "Of course not. There's nothing wrong with wanting the things that made you happy for your children."

"Really?" Emo challenged, "What about this--?"

I reached out and flipped the album shut before he could turn to the next incriminating photograph. Emo's mouth dropped open in shock. Alex, on the other hand, was outraged.

"Ow!" I yelped as she slapped my hand.

Joan's eyes about popped out of their sockets, "What has gotten into you young lady?"

"You will let us finish Joan," Emo stated.

I started at this, "Why do you keep calling your mother tha—"

"All will be revealed in time Bruce," Alex cut me off.

"But—But—But—" I protested feebly, but Emo was reaching below the tabletop again.

"Witness Exhibit B," he announced, placing an old, yellowed greeting card on the table and sliding it over.

I could see Joan's hand trembling as she picked it up and opened, letting out a little gasp of shock, "Bruce, you said you burned all of these."

*Crap*, I thought and went on the offensive. "You know you're in big trouble young man. You went through my personal-!"

"Some interesting reading, Dad," Emo kept his eyes locked with mine, "or should I say 'Honey Bear Pooky Pie?'"

Joan let out a little pathetic whimper.

“What’s wrong ‘Snugglebunny?’” Alex taunted her, leaning over the table.

Joan did not meet her eyes.

“Me thinks someone’s got a guilty conscience,” Emo noted, shifting his eyes to his mother.

“It’s just a love letter,” Joan sniffled and I thought she might burst into tears any moment. “It’s a beautiful thing. There’s nothing wrong--.”

“These pet names you guys used for one another while you were courting are the same nicknames you forced on us growing up,” Alex challenged.

“Until we got too old for them,” Emo added.

“And practically had to force you to give them up,” Alex finished.

“Exactly,” Emo sat back, squeezing his sister’s hand.

“So what?” I demanded, and Joan whimpered.

“So...” Emo began, pausing for effect, “Alex and I are clones of you and Joan. You are both living out some twisted fantasy vicariously through us.”

“You are not clones!” Joan exploded.

“There’s nothing twisted about it!” I exploded at the same time.

The looks Alex and Emo exchanged were unmistakable, *Slam Dunk*.

*Brats*, I thought, but said instead, “I mean, if you were clones, there would be nothing twisted about it; but you aren’t clones, so it doesn’t matter anyway. Don’t you see?” I gave a single pathetic laugh to reassure everyone. “No big deal. Never was. Not in a million years.”

“Bruce,” Joan interjected anxiously, “you’re not helping.”

“Yeah Bruce,” Alex added.

“Honey,” I said to Joan, but stopped to give Alex a weird look, not ‘Dad’ again. “Honey, our darling offspring...” Alex and Emo rolled their eyes. “...our wonderful children have gotten some crazy mixed up ideas in their heads and I’m just trying to set them straight. You know, it’s like that time Emo thought aliens were hiding his toys...”

“Ten years ago,” Emo defended.

“...and he needed his daddy to find his toys and show him it was all in his imagination?” I nodded, smiling. “Remember Honey? This is like that time. Alex and Emo are having delusions

that they are clones of us, like some sort of ‘*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*’ crazy science fiction idea that no respectable individual would entertain or read or—“

“Bruce,” tears of urgency were welling up in Joan’s eyes. “Please dear. You know how sometimes there are situations where you can keep talking and eventually explain things in a way that will make everything all right?”

I nodded, “Uh-huh.”

Her voice almost squeaked, “This isn’t one of those times.”

“I’m just trying to set my son and daughter straight—“

“Technically, I’m not your daughter, Bruce,” Alex said simply.

“And I’m not your son, Joan.” Emo lifted his chin.

“Bruce—This man—Your father is most certainly your father!” Joan snapped, sticking her fingernail painfully into my cheek, making me wince. “You will respect him and address him properly! Do you understand me little missy?”

Alex frowned disapprovingly at her mother, “How did you feel when your mother referred to you as ‘little missy?’”

“I felt put in my proper place, subservient to my parents,” Joan snapped, but her voice was trembling, about to burst, “just as I hope you feel right now!”

“Fine!” Alex slapped her free palm on the tabletop and looked at me. “Do us all a favor and stop putting your great big stinky foot in your mouth, *STEPFATHER!*”

“Dang,” I grumbled, slumping back against my chair with my arms folded over my chest.

Joan’s temper was starting to overtake her hysteria, “You two have obviously been planning this confrontation for some time. It’s well-rehearsed, and I’m glad those pee-wee acting lessons didn’t going to waste...”

I nodded my head, *Good job Honey. Put them in their place.*

“...and all those video games and movies tend to get your imaginations running a little wild at times.”

I smiled smugly, *Damn straight.*

“You kids have always been so very close...”

*That’s right, soften it up now baby. Give them an out.*

“...and I can tell by the way you kids look at one another...”

I frowned and scratched my mustache, *'Look at one another?'*

"...that you both love each other very much, and you do a great job of providing emotional support at school at home. I'm so proud of how your aren't ashamed to publicly show your—"

"Oh my God!" I blurted out suddenly. "Don't tell me they've developed feelings for one another!?!?"

"Huh?" Alex and Emo's mouths dropped open simultaneously.

Each one looked at the other, searching for some insight into my statement. I could see Alex get it first, as she let go of Emo's hand like it was a tarantula. Emo figured it out from Alex's expression, and his own face instantly matched her look of disgust. Joan dropped my hand on the table and pushed her chair away from it to give me the indignation look, fists on her hips.

"Way to go champ," she said after letting me wriggle under the heat of her gaze for nearly a minute. "You just destroyed fifteen years worth of innocent sibling love expressions. Congratulations Bruce."

At least she wasn't on the verge of tears anymore. In fact, everyone was staring at me with mixtures of disapproval and shock. Good. I had given them all a common enemy. Now I could make some progress.

I took a deep breath and said, "Why is cloning a bad thing? There are advantages to being a clone. It reduces the number of variables you have to deal with in life. You know what you're body's going to do to you as you get older. Most people have to worry about their genetic predispositions to diabetes, cancer, and whatnot. Clones know exactly what they're genes have in store for them."

"It's like my philosophy professor used to say, 'If you want to know what a girl will look like when she gets older, look at her mother,'" I smiled reassuringly at Alex. "See sweetie, this way you know you'll grow up to be a hottie, just like your mommy. You can tell your prom date that this is what you'll look like when you grow older and they'll be more likely to stay in a long-term relationship with you." I nodded my head encouragingly, "Isn't that cool?"

Alex's stare was pure horror.

“Bruce honey,” Joan said, squeezing my hand urgently, the hysteria creeping back into her voice. “Please be quiet.”

“But it’s not our choice,” Emo argued and Alex nodded. “You decided to make us just like you. Nature could have made us out of any possible combination of your genes, but you made the choice of what our genes were going to be and what we would have to live with because of them.”

Joan’s mouth was open, working, but it took several moments for any sound to come out, “None of us is given the choice to be born sweeties. Everyone, at some point in their lives, gets so upset over what life has dealt them that they try to take it out on their parents, to blame them. It’s perfectly understandable to feel that way from time to time, especially at your age, being young adults. It’s a very awkward time of life. You’re trying to assert your independence, but at the same time so much of your life is out of your control.”

“You don’t understand, Mom. By choosing to make us clones,” Alex countered, “you have placed that much more of a burden on us. We have that much more of our lives out of our control. You did this to us!”

“Why are you putting us on trial?” Joan exclaimed. “Even if you are clones, there’s nothing wrong with that! Why this persecution? Why this—this—this witch hunt? It seems like everyone’s scrutinizing everyone else’s kids for signs that they might be clones! Your father and I had you out of love for one another! That’s all! Why does everyone try to second guess that?”

“Yeah!” I broke in. “Exactly. It’s just your mother’s and my love for one another that prompted us to clone ourselves. Think about it. Your mother and I met in our 30s. We had both spent entire lifetimes without one another. It’s hard for you to understand this at your age, but there was so much we had missed out on. I wanted to watch your mother grow up and develop, to see her become a woman, to watch her chest expand into--.”

“Not one more word!” Joan warned. “I will divorce you so fast and so thoroughly your head will still be spinning when you find yourself living in a cardboard box behind the supermarket!”

Alex’s eyes danced between us for a moment, then at her own chest and her mouth crinkled up in that way my wife’s



would when I made an especially kinky bedroom request, “Gross!”

My face flushed red, but I managed put on my best righteous indignation look, shaking my finger at her, “I don’t know what you’re thinking young lady, but grow up!” Good recovery.

Now it was time to get back in control.

“Okay kids,” I held up my hands. “What’s brought this up?”

Alex and Emo both frowned at me.

Emo cocked one eye at me quizzically, “Are you deliberately being obtuse?”

“Huh?” I yoked. “I’m a little overweight but—“

“Obtuse,” Alex repeated the funny word. “Deliberately ignorant, bullheaded.”

“Wha?”

“After everything we’ve just told you, you’re asking us why we’re bringing this up,” Emo explained.

“Yeah! I am!” I shot back. “So you kids have been suspicious for a long time. Big deal, but you’ve decided to call a family conference over it. You’ve rehearsed this whole schpiel I dunno how many times, but you’re even using big words that nobody understands to control the conversation. Something triggered what I’m witnessing here. Something made the pot boil over so that you kids had to jimmy-up up this whole dramatic confrontation. What was the straw that broke the weak link in the chain?”

Emo was obviously off-balance. “Uh...” he began and looked to Alex for support.

*Ah-ha! The advantage is mine!* I thought, and then said in my most parental sympathetic tone, “Did someone say something to you? I mean, other than just the kids making fun at the bus stop?”

Emo was playing with his hands now and Alex was avoiding my eyes. Finally she said, “Tony Ford’s mom s-said... sh-she said...”

Tears were welling up in Alex’s eyes, she was choking on her words the way she did as a little girl. My blood started to boil. What had that tight-ass busy-body said to hurt my baby girl?

“Mrs. Ford said we were an abomination in the eyes of God,” Emo blurted out suddenly.

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