

Cloneslavement

The rows of magnetic latches began to dislodge from the capsules that contained them, clicking in a rippling cascade that made Katie jolt into reality.

She dove into action, minimizing the holographic projections of court case updates in front of her with swift gestures of her hand. Though her Host Family had given her the privilege of immersing herself in any online content her HoloPad was capable of legally accessing, they were never tolerant with her rebelling against her role in the family—her obsession with the progress of Clones' Rights, the controversial topic that had recently swept the nation, would not be met with enthusiasm from Kate and her traditionalist American family.

The metal door to Katie's room lurched open just as she tucked the device under her comforter. Her eyes were greeted with the sight of Kate, her naturally-conceived twin, whose green eyes were riddled with glints of malice. Sauntering towards the bed, Kate adjusted her evening dress, her lips pulling into a glossy smirk.

"I need you to do something for me, DupliKate," she sneered, chuckling as Katie grimaced at the familiar jibe. Kate and her parents had begun calling her that at the tender age of three, getting accustomed to the social acceptability of mistreating clones. Never had they once agreed to call her Katie, the name she had self-selected in the hopes of embracing individuality. Katie glared at her biological equivalent, revolted by the fact that her entire existence had been spawned from Kate's genetic material.

When Kate drew the silvery stick out of her nano-compressible DigiPack, a commodity all high schoolers possessed, Katie felt her pupils dilate in alarm. It was a Submit-Stick, a device all honors students had been required to complete their assignments in after the MindMerge scandal of 2045—over thirty thousand high schoolers across the nation had been plagiarizing each other's intellectual content within an unauthorized deep database, leading to the creation of a portable chip that cross-checked inputted assignments with every assignment that'd been completed on its subject. She tossed it to Katie carelessly.

"I'm going out tonight, and my National Honors Essay is due..." Kate checked her watch. "Ah. Six hours from now. All the information you'll need to do it is in the stick."

She made her way to the door, turning around one last time before departing for her usual Friday-night club. “If I check that it hasn’t been submitted by then, well... it’d be a shame if something were to happen to me. I could overdose on something, go into a coma... I’d need to be saved by my medical insurance,” she threatened with a smug grin, whirling around and striding out the doorway.

It didn’t take long for Katie to register what she’d meant. Sixteen years ago in 2037, Kate’s parents had sent Kate’s prenatal DNA to KloneStar, a company that had recently patented an elaborate human-cloning system. KloneStar had provided thousands of American parents with the service of cloning their children as a form of medical insurance—in the event of a health complication, the child’s “Klone” was a treasure trove of medical resources, including perfectly compatible cells and organs ready for immediate transplantation. Katie was an expendable pawn in Kate’s life, and Kate often exploited her by threatening to harm herself. Perhaps the release of the World Intellectual Property Organization’s Biopatent Act was to blame for the inhumane treatment Katie received day by day—in the hopes of propelling worldwide scientific advancements, the WIPO had declared that “any unnaturally-conceived biological entity is patentable, and can be classified as the intellectual property of its creator as well as an expendable asset of its biological source of origination.” Katie was nothing more than a patented creation of science with no human rights—and she’d continue to be one, unless the Biopatent Act were to be overridden in the future.

Leaning back against the headboard of her bed, Katie angrily thrust the Submit-Stick into her HoloPad. A list of instructions was immediately projected into the air, detailing the topic of the essay Kate needed to submit to satisfy her Honors student credits. *Write an essay on your stance on whether clones should be regarded as intellectual property or as humans.*

The words struck Katie like a bolt of lightning, her veins surging with an electrifying glee she’d never experienced before. Kate had just given her a potential golden ticket to freedom; if the essay was written well enough, it’d be published in countless academic journals and sweep the nation, serving as an extra weapon in the

arsenal against Anti-Clones' Rights politicians and activists. Resting the HoloPad on her lap, she cracked her knuckles with satisfaction before setting to work, channeling every ounce of anger, passion, and vigor within her into the 100-kilobyte document. Her fingers raced faster than her heart, faster than the time that seemed to soar by as she wrote.

The moment she'd clicked "submit" three hours later had been the most euphoric moment of her entire life.

The week after that, good news had reached Kate and her family, rapidly spreading to strangers and acquaintances alike. Kate's essay had received a score of an astounding 4950/5000 points, the highest-scored National Honors Essay in history. Being showered with nationwide accolade and collegiate praise wasn't good enough for Kate, though—naturally, she felt the need to morph the situation into an excuse to throw a house party.

Music with obscene lyrics blared throughout the entire house. Katie sat in a small armchair near the punch bowl, watching Kate guffaw hysterically in a crowd of her equally-obnoxious friends. "Kate's" essay was to be published in two hours, after going through the standard Intellectual Integrity Verification Process that every publicly-released innovative creation went through in the United States. Rumors will be flying around when everyone actually reads it, Katie thought to herself with amusement. Kate will have a hard time explaining why she's so supportive of Clones' Rights, being the owner of one herself. She'll have no choice but to support my legal emancipation if she wants to steer clear of suspicion. It'll be the beginning of a domino effect.

Her thoughts were brutally interrupted by a slosh of sparkling liquid splattering all over her white top, staining it with blotchy purple dots. A young man with lemon-yellow hair had stumbled in front of Katie and spilled his vodka. Flinching in disgust, Katie rose from her seat, her repulsion skyrocketing at the sight of dozens of drunk teens trashing the scene. In the center of the commotion was Kate, her red lipstick smeared along the crevices of her mouth, who was swaying back and forth while

chugging down beer after beer. Rolling her eyes, Katie reached for a napkin, about to leave—just before she noticed her twin acting stranger than usual.

Kate was spinning around in disoriented circles, her intoxication consuming any sense left in her as her high-pitched giggles rose above the music. She began to twirl faster, making even her drunk friends back away in alarm. Katie froze, feeling microseconds tick by in the terrifying anticipation of the disaster that was about to follow. The next five seconds of Katie's life were a blur: Kate waltzed out of the crowd's center, stumbling over the third-floor balcony ledge and toppling down into the merciless blackness of the Friday night.

Tears continued to stream down Katie's face twelve hours later as she sat in the stool next to the surgical chamber's entrance, reading over the medical report for the seventeenth time. Kate's fall had resulted in several critical spinal injuries and mangled limbs damaged beyond repair. In addition to those, her excessive drinking had led to her developing liver inflammation. Gripping the paper tightly, Katie stiffened, paralyzed by the fact that she—the expendable clone—was now going to lose her liver, several appendages, and her life for the sake of Kate's survival.

Of course, Kate would be facing criminal charges against underage drinking and fraudulent intellectual fabrication after her health was fully restored. The Intellectual Integrity Verification Process, much to Katie's bewilderment, had unearthed the fact that Kate hadn't written the award-winning paper at all—perhaps the Submit-Stick had recorded Katie's fingerprints while she had typed it up. After the scandal had been revealed to the public, KloneStar had stepped in immediately, refusing to allow the paper to be published on the grounds that it was their legal intellectual property—after all, their patented creation had written it, making it an indirect byproduct of their innovation. Katie's hopes of freeing clones across the nation had been murdered by the sciolism and ignorance of those that would be corporately and medically handicapped as a result of them.

Heaving a final sigh, Katie set the paper down and stood up. The rows of magnetic latches on the door to the chamber began to dislodge from the capsules that

contained them, clicking in a rippling cascade that numbed Katie's senses and blurred the world around her.

Her existence was about to become all the more futile.