

ONE OF ME

Unintended consequences.

BY TARYN HEINTZ

To my darling Bryan,
At the time, I hated the words ‘difficulty conceiving’. You did too, Bryan, remember? We used to laugh and beg people to be honest, use honest language. It was OK to say Jenny and Bryan are barren or infertile — not reproductively challenged or something similar. But, the language didn’t matter, in the end, we simply could not have children and we were devastated no matter how many different ways people said it.

Remember the day the pamphlet came through the post? I suspect our details were passed to Life Solutions from one of the various clinics we were registered at in our city. It said: “Have a child just like you.” Literally, just like me. A clone baby. What a brilliant idea. People would pay £100,000 and have the option of cloning themselves or their spouse. They could be parents.

“Who should we choose, Bry? A little me or a little you?” I asked.

We chose to clone me because of your weak immune system. That, and we always fancied having a daughter. We wanted to raise a little girl, we wanted to be parents.

The day she was handed over to us, we decided to call her Lila after your grandmother. She didn’t feel like a clone, she didn’t look like a clone, because at the time she looked nothing like me. I was 42, after all. And during her childhood it was fun watching her grow, steering her away from my mistakes.

We encouraged her towards subjects for which we knew she would excel because of her natural aptitude, sports where she would feel a comfortable ease and foods we knew wouldn’t upset her stomach and would keep her fit and lean. Made sure to lather her with SPF and expensive moisturizers.

Lila was like me, only better, healthier. She wouldn’t have my age spots, or struggle to find her place in the world. We could guide her, we had the



inside knowledge. It all seemed so perfect. So easy. She was happy, she was gorgeous.

The day Lila turned 18 you looked at her and said: “God, Jenny, she is so like you, isn’t she?” She was, but her hair was shinier, her clothes hung perfectly on her svelte youthful figure. Did I hear lust in your voice? I thought I did. Even if it wasn’t there. That’s the problem with the seed of doubt, once it’s planted, it’s all you think about.

When Lila was 21, you took her out for drinks. I stayed at home. I couldn’t bear your closeness. I couldn’t bear seeing a younger version of me out with my husband, bonding, joking, while I was fading, ageing.

That’s why people shouldn’t clone themselves, Bryan, because they see the past and the future at the same time. I saw us when I

looked at you and Lila, the old us.

I guess it was my own fault that you enjoyed Lila’s company more than mine. It depressed me to be around her and I couldn’t tell you why. I just sulked.

Was I a mother jealous of her daughter? Or a woman jealous of herself?

How sick of me to accuse you of being attracted to your own daughter, but how can I not want you to be? She’s me. You were attracted to me.

The implications were starting to show. Other clone families were writing to each other, other *mothers* and *fathers* experiencing the same problems. You insisted that you were Lila’s father.

“The End,” you said after we discussed it for the last time. “I’m her father and I love her like a daughter. So she looks like you, so what?! You’re my wife. She’s my daughter. The End.”

I knew better than to bring it up again, but felt a strange sense of reassurance when Life Solutions went bust.

Still, I couldn’t let go. I couldn’t be around Lila without hating her, without resenting her. She is the Jenny I wished I had the discipline and youth to be.

You see, that’s why I withdrew. That’s why I moved out. Seeing her hurts me.

But it’s not enough to simply be away, I need to go away for good. I’m slowly realizing in my quiet solitude that there is only supposed to be one of me in this world. One Jenny for one Bryan, and you deserve the better version.

This isn’t a love note, this is a goodbye letter. I know it’s clichéd and cowardly, but I’ve taken all the sleeping pills in the bottle Dr Greenfield gave me. Every. Last. One. Washed them down with cold vodka and now I await sleep. It’s not a spectacular way to go, but I guess I had *difficulty conceiving* a better way.

I love you,
Jenny. ■

Taryn Heintz currently lives in Cardiff, Wales, and is from Seattle, Washington. She likes to write in her spare time and enjoys learning new languages.

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