

I Accidentally Cloned Myself in the Science Center and I was Initially Worried but the Benefits Seem to Outweigh the Oddity

I.

I accidentally cloned myself in the science center last week. It had been a pretty weird Tuesday already. Before lunch I learned that Juicemonger (my cat) has green eyes, not blue; the coffee maker worked alright even though it was unplugged; and my boyfriend Alden ate an entire burrito without noticing that I had been using it to store six or seven raw carrots. (It keeps them fresh.) It was the kind of day when there is too much free energy. And the laws of matter and conservation aren't working right. Peculiar peculiar.

Accidentally cloning yourself feels tingly and electric. Also soft, like a prism bending light into color. At first, I thought I was looking at a reflection, like that scene in the second Garfield movie where Gramfeld and Grendle mimic each others' movements for fifty-two minutes before Gramfeld finally consumes his double and ends the movie. The first thing my doppelganger and I said to each other was, "Woah, radical!" Which is not a thing I normally say.

"So, um," we said in unison.

"How do you think—Why would—Shoot."

We both pondered whether it would be a good idea to try and replicate the experiment, so we tried, but continually produced nothing but weird-feeling knock-off green-blue playdough.

"Which one of us is the clone?" We both said, trying to sort the handfuls of blue-green putty. We looked at each other. "We have got to stop speaking in unison."

"Splorch," they said.

"Haha. Quee-Queg," I said.

"Okay, now we're getting somewhere," they said.

"Obviously the first thing on the agenda is to recreate that spiderman joke."

"Haha, because there's two of us. Yes, this is the most important thing," they said.

There are obviously defects to having two people very suddenly where there was only one before. We only had one bicycle, one bed, and one vuvuzela—things which are difficult to share. Whichever one of us was the double didn't necessarily have a social security number, pay tuition, or a birth certificate, but that didn't matter.

Lunch was interesting. Alys said she didn't know I had an identical twin sister, and I said I didn't, and yes yes I cloned myself on accident and no no no I don't know how to do it again and every time I use the machine it just makes different colored putty instead of anything useful.

"June, here's an idea!" said Laura, a science major. "You could clone other stuff like batteries or food. That could really help people."

My twin put some blue-green polymer clay on her nose.

"Tried that," I said.

"You're welcome to fiddle around with the machinery," my doppelganger said, putting more putty on Laura's nose. "If it works again, it could be a big huge fun time for science."

"Yeah. It breaks every law of conservation," said Deshawn, also a science major. I put some putty on his shoulder.

"I have so much putty," I said.

The next day a lot of people used the putty machine and none of them could duplicate anything except different colors of weird-textured knock-off playdough. Everyone got a different color. Chloe got Violet. Hazel got Smaragdine. Madison got Corpse Flower Purple.

That night, Juicemonger was very confused because he got twice the attention he usually gets. Alden, my extended family, and French chemist Antoine Lavoisier were also confused when I explained the situation.

Next Tuesday, Claire, my suitemate, came up with a big ball of fuschia polymer clay and asked me what it was like to live with a clone of myself. “Hey, June? What’s it like to live with a clone of yourself?” she said. “Also, may I pet Juicemonger?”

“Yes you may,” I said. “It’s quite nice, but we are out of eggs.”

Juicemonger meowed a high vibrato C sharp, which made a bird hit the window and opened the door for Wilson to bring his suitcase in.

“So it’s fun?” Claire said.

“Yes. Only because I like myself. I wouldn’t recommend it if you don’t have a good relationship with yourself already. Also, other June is a boy now, just because we thought about it, and it makes sense for one of us to be a boy.”

Wilson sat down on the floor and Juicemonger jumped on top of his head. “What are the best and worst things about it?” Wilson said, petting Juicemonger.

“You can play tennis against yourself.”

Wilson nodded. “Is that a good thing or a bad thing?”

I obtained Juicemonger from Wilson’s head and deposited him on Claire’s. “Well, I’d be the first person ever to win tennis against myself, but the emotional toll would be monumental. So both.”

II.

Good science is esoteric, and time cooks us all in different ways. There’s no end product—just the random shuffling of matter again and again and again and again and again. On orders of magnitude too big to think about. Big big big big.

I accidentally cloned myself in the science center and that night we put two white flowers in different bowls and let the green and blue food coloring change each of them slowly, slowly, slowly. But, because you can’t end a story couched in the shuffling silk of abstraction: we’ll leave you with the image of us holding hands in the woods and hooting and hollering and hooting into the vibrant spring wind with the air just warm enough to be sweet and happy. And all that night and the next and next, the flowers on the window blossomed different colors even though they were the same to begin with.