

same day deliveries

Yeah, I think there were once two twin sisters, Daisy and Daphne. They did stuff you'd expect twin sisters do (eating at the same pace, skipping stones, and silently arguing). The parents were old money and absent. It was a good combo for invincibility and free will.

You'd normally find them driving through a type of perfect life where you just don't have to screw up. But one day, there was the first ever disagreement; Daisy wanted a dancing dandelion tattoo while Daphne wanted a dangling dancing dandelion tattoo. Deviation was unthinkable to them. They sat closed down in the tattoo store and held a lot of fear. After 8 hours of nothing, the shopkeep proposed a solution; He wouldn't make the dandelion dangling or stiff, but only slightly dehydrated looking. It's something both girls equally hated, and they cracked a smile at it. The terrifying gap between them began to shrink as the ink was put in their skin. But it was too late because the evidence was there. They now knew they could disagree.

They left the shop tired. Instead of hoping people would notice the tattoos, they wondered if the needle hurt each the same. In a week, their bodies stopped waking up at the same time. Then they stopped mixing up their names.

They kept digging hard for differences while cursing off their childish curiosity; Off synched heart beats there, debates about politics also there. Something always made them think similarity was only a disguise for difference, which was a disguise for throw up. And for every sameness they turned over, a bunch of tadpole-like differences came out.

Then their senses all divorced one another: Sharing the same smile was only there to blind them to off-pitch duets. Equally bad BO masked their differences in favorite food. They kept touching each other's bodies, but it stopped feeling like one glob and more like a gnarly shoe lace knot.

They dug into a depression until they both belonged to their bed. One morning, Daisy lay asleep while Daphne blank stared at her. They used to flatter themselves by just looking at the other. Fake ignorance, god, and eating all tried to help, and none worked. At a certain point, they just couldn't look at each other anymore. But neither wanted to abandon the special air they made. They closed their eyes and touched and talked and imagined the other.

The darkness let them listen to their bodies. Daisy slept more. Daphne breathed more. She'd line up the inhales against Daisy's exhales, hoping they'd trade the same air. That never worked, but the breathing accidentally filled her with an answer; Using the best DNA sequencer that money can buy, they'd finally be able to visualize their identical code.

Daphne scurried onto the bed and tapped then shook Daisy.

"Daisy, wake up!"

“What?”

“Our DNA.”

“What about it?”

Daphne's eyes were wide, and one was kindly twitching. She spoke through a white smile: “We know it’s essentially identical, but what about some new proof? Either for a fix or just for a little relief. Either way, it’s good. What you think? Just to be able to look at it and say, ‘there! it’s right there.’” She slapped the bed sheets to back herself up.

Daisy rose: “What do we hope for? Please not relief from something we already know. That’s so exhausting, and I’m already tired. If we do it, let’s only do it for the fun. Anything else is crazy, and we used to be good at fun. I know that’s still worth trying. Not wanting to disagree, Daphne accepted before she could realize: “Yes, yes, we’re right.”

The next morning, a delivery boy dropped off the machine. Daphne pulled out a knife from her boot and slit the palm of her hand. She gently grasped Daisy’s hand and did the same. They put their hands over hands, pressing down like trying to condense them all into a single point. Blood smeared and soaked the clump, dripping into the machine. They closed their eyes with youth.

The sequencer spun and clunked and chimed. The sisters stood in solace. They felt the bumps of past bondings and tried to ignore their different fingerprints. The DNA box clinked off, and they leapt toward the half-spat-out receipt paper. Bloodied fingers poured over the data.

They looked and spoke at each other with the shock so bad it's casual: “Oh my god. Even our DNA doesn’t match. “We’re the worst clones in history. We can’t even run a machine right.”

“We ran it right. But the mutations don't look clone-like.”

“What other difference could there be?”

“I -- I think we're twin sisters...”

the urban clone dictionary

Dan was a clone, and Ferb was his clone, or the other way around. The same things that affected other clones weighed on these two. Most importantly, the piles of trash and hate they tried to sift through to find a good manual for their lives. In the early days, the word clone was defined the same way water is; Water is H₂O, and 2+2=4, and clones are genetically identical. By the time Dan and Ferb were cloned, the word had taken on many lives, and not many lived for them:

1. Clone

noun (biology)

An organism or cell, or group of organisms or cells, produced asexually from one ancestor or stock to which they are genetically identical.

2. Clone

noun

(singular; informal; derogatory)

A person (often adolescent) who mimics and adopts the behaviors and personality of another to gain social status, prestige, or resources.

3. Clone

noun

(plural; informal, derogatory):

A group or community that unintentionally follow restrictive and unimportant rules as condition for social inclusion.

4. Clone

noun

(singular; vulgar)

A person who was conceived through asexual reproduction.

5. Clone

noun

A person who is (or was) genetically identical to another person

6. Clone

noun

A clone that has living genetically identical relatives.

7. Cloned

noun

A clone that had living genetically identical relatives.

8. Cloning; Cloned; Clone

verb

A popular dance move characterized by a large group executing the same minute movements in cohesion.

As children, Dan and Ferb read the 8 definitions like commandments. But with them just being definitions, they preferred more metaphorical interpretations. For instance, they saw asexual as the first and purest form of reproduction because it started with the letter a. Armed with this sweet little secret, they held themselves a little higher.

It was entirely unpredictable how the two clones decided what was to be taken literally or not. In addition to getting unusually good at dancing, there was the side effect of Dan and Ferb mistaking all advice needing to start with the letter C. They were the best command clones in town for cleaning, calibrating, coddling, and caring. They mysteriously refused to push the cart at the grocery store, but would insist on carrying the food into the house. Then they always cooked a five-course meal. Eventually, the mom and dad noticed the pattern. They accepted the boys' obsession with C. Neither ever asked why, though: there was enough to get done within the confines, and it made a good party trick.

the unfortunate fate of ferb

One day, the young Ferb creaked open the door to the cigar room that was only used for TV. A man sat in a fleshy sofa chair and seemed a little flat. Ferb shuffled in.

"Sir?"

"You can call me Dad if you please, Ferb."

"Isn't Gabe your son?"

"I have the same burden of responsibility from you. You and Dan are different from Gabe, but you're all the same to me. Does that make sense?"

"I think so. Does that make me your son?"

"Weirdly no." His dad paused, then spoke with an exhale: "What's on your mind, Ferb?"

"Can Ferb ask for a favor?" Ferb asked

"Don't speak like that. Just say I."

Ferb corrected: "Yes. Can I ask for a favor?"

"What is it?" the dad asked.

"Well, I feel like I'm good at caring, cheering, and commuting, but I was wondering if you could command me to be captivating."

"Captivating? Why that one?"

"Well, I already like to dance. But I want to show it. But in front of people who aren't dancing. I'm dancing for them, and they're sitting for me."

"Like the theater?!" The man hacked up phlegm in a ruined-lung type of laugh. He spoke as if Ferb wasn't there: "Ah, what the fuck, why not. Ferb, I hereby command you to be captivating." Ferb's face lit up with imaginary wonderment.

"But I command you to only be captivating within the confines of the circus. No theater, there's a difference. If you can't find a circus, create your own. And you have to record it all and show me at the end of each month so I can learn from your glorious talent for pageantry. Oh, also, I command you to stop showing me if I look bored or sleepy.

In a soldier-like affirmative, Ferb responded: Yes, sir! I mean, Dad!" He ran off.

mothers like to look

Dan hated 100% of the things he was commanded to do. Since he'd only follow C starting commands and had no free time, he hated his life. But one day, Dan realized the parents never commanded him to calculate. It was something that could be done silently within him. And it could be done while busy and tired.

So began Dan's love for calculating. It started with counting; He counted the amount of time he used a pepper grinder. Then he counted the flakes of pepper falling out the grinder. After the pepper fell on the food, he was disappointed that they just sat there. He started staring as the seasoning fell, calculating speed, velocity, air resistance, gravity, pepper dust mass, pepper dust shape, pepper dust roughness, and whatever non-relevant variables he had space for.

But then Dan ran out of pepper and was sad. He felt slapped around by all the emotions and was bothered by his sensitivity. For a solution and some fun, he tried calculating why he cared so much. Unlike the pepper, he refused to boil himself down to his favorite variables. Dan closed his eyes with the burners still on, trying to figure it out. His will and brain leaped froged each other till they both forgot the point. The 4th course was burning, but he didn't move. The house mother finally noticed:

"Dan, your cooking has gotten worse." She effortlessly pointed to the rattling pots.

"I'm so sorry, Ms.," Dan said automatically. He scrambled toward the pots. Oil slashed and seared his cheeks. She flicked off the burners with her long nails. "No, no, it's okay. I like extra pepper in my extra boiled water.

She slowed her energy to stare at the pots and then right into Ferb. "Plus, there are more important things than food."

"Like what?"

"You already know. I've been where you are, trying to find that sweet spot between thought and action."

"Yes," Dan said, bewildered.

"You have a beautiful mind, Dan, don't let anyone stuff it down. Do you want to calculate things with me?"

"What does that even mean? Dan said accidentally meanly.

The mother took no offense: "It means we'd bond over the things we find beauty in."

Dan looked cautiously enthused and at the kitchen floor. "Is that a command?"

"Dan, there's gonna be a day this family doesn't need you and Ferb anymore. And when we don't, you'll listen and listen. I'll tell you now. Nature will only give you so many commands. These commands are more demanding and violent than I can ever shout or hit you. Nature told you to calculate, and that's great. So does it even matter if I command you?" Dan broke into embarrassed tears.

The mother felt too mean and wanted him to feel better. "I command you to control yourself," she tenderly said to dry up the tears.

But Dan thought she commanded him to control his own will. He sniffled and replied: "No."

Realizing her mistake, the mother commanded the one thing she thought he could never shake: "I command you to calculate."

They both stood there for a beat. The mother's piercing eyes scanned any movement the boy Dan made.

He thought: *Am I that influenced by freedom, that it makes my own love for beauty conditional? Would I still count the walls of a prison cell, over and over, just for the sake of it?*

Regardless of the answers, the decision was beyond his will; Ruled by nature or the mother's command, Dan never consciously calculated again.

natural hair salons and selfishness

*heaven is super special
heaven has plenty of wrap-around porches.
I hope there's a middle ground there for my beloved
who betrayed me with their blood
heaven is especially special for them.
I think they snuck in the back door.*

(for daphne and her new friends)

Iron soaked the dewy air, and clone blood crept up on Daisy's boots. She stared at nothing and thought of very little. A suicided Daphne seeped and bent around in the back of her head, but always refused to materialize into a solid. Sometimes she'd pour into Daisy's limbs and mouth with little mannerisms. Sometimes it felt like they shared the same body again. Sometimes it felt like an embarrassing sister-puppet possession.

Daisy took a long pull of some new world cigarette and waited for the foreign hit: *I've never seen these types of clones before*, she thought. Unknown to Daisy, not many had. They were a small bundle in nowhere: 432 from the same strand and 431 dead in a crop field. She thought it was impressive they had their own wild colony, and finally let it register that she slaughtered them.

A special sweetness was creamed on their lifeless faces. They lived and worked and loved like any other people would. And knowing they'd never have kids made time go crazy sometimes. The days would be so beautifully long, but the years were deflated. Meanwhile, little joyous things sprinkled themselves around the encampment: alliterated garden signs (for whimsicality), one communal vat of soup, and semi-circled foldable chairs.

It should be, like, ultimate selfishness, but it isn't, Daisy thought. What added to her confusion was looking at where they chose to be one or many. They all had the same redundant name tags with an inscribed *and simple Martin*. Clean crew cuts and no body hair made them look like a wasted army division. Clothes appeared purely functional, with purple cotton-like garbs gently flowing around their muddy ankles. At the same time, their number system seemed to have no way to represent a collection. Five clones were always seen as one clone, and another, and another, and another, and one more.

The most noticeable display of unity was in their bodies. Some had gouged out eyes, vacant tongues, or bashed in noses. Everyone killed at least one of their senses, but it always averaged out to normal in the whole. Daisy looked past her own violence and stared at the self-mutilations. *Why make crutches out of everyone?* she thought.

But the cigarette began to make her feel like just another body in the wasteland. She took off her boots and let her bare feet soak in the bloody grass. Then she got naked and laid on the ground, nuzzling with her victims. Her senses began to feel like tools for empathy. Tasting the iron, smelling the wetness, feeling the scavenger, and listening to the tears from the caged-up Martin. Something prevented her from using sight; Her eyes were open but glazed over the scene.

Now regretting the drugs, Daisy went limp and dramatic. *Is darkness better than useless light?* She thought while pleading: "Stop fighting, please, it's okay! You can share." The Daisy mistook her eyes as two characters vying for control. The maroon mud half-bubbled. It muffled her sobbing.

The moment caused the caged-up Martin to stop crying (in the name of fright and awe). The new silence shot Daisy's attention on the planet. Its hissing gases began to break down the bodies. She thought of lying there, hoping the ground would take her. The acid was burning her skin, but it felt interesting. Then the Martin spoke. It was a language Daisy could never hope of knowing. But she accepted each sound with a wholeness. The words were stern and calm. They were eloquent and sad. They were tired. Daisy silently wailed with an open mouth. She knew he touched her in a way Daphne never had.

For the first time, the vague whirls and whistles in Daisy's head condensed into a solid picture of her sister. Her mind watched her Daphne die and then stand up and die again. Each death felt completely separate from the last, like it was an animation on repeat. Except on the last death, Daphne held her hand flat over her eyes like she was looking down a desert road. She tilted her head back and forth in search of something. Unable to find it, she shot her fists to her sides, huffing and puffing. Then she just disappeared.

Daisy rose from the bodies and walked toward Martin. Her long curly hair was matted thick and straight. Her skin was burned and her eyes bloodshot. She opened Martin's cage and flew him to an oasis. When they arrived, he sat curled up next to a warm river. Daisy spoke: "Some say you're not a clone if it's just you. Others say it's in your bones and teeth. You're alive because they see you as a one. People like one because you can do stuff with it, but it's not too multiplied. But you like a lot of ones, and there's nothing wrong with that." Daisy gifted him a cloning machine and smiled. She didn't know he was deaf, but it didn't matter. She boarded her ship and flew off toward the void. Jobs flashed up on the screens. She swiped decline on all of them, except the one she already signed the Unitary contract for.

dan and ferb against the honest world

"You think we can con these fools?" Dan said.

He responded to himself: "It's worth a shot. Something to fill the time."

Ferb ignored him while he delicately danced under the red lights of the ship. He naturally incorporated turning the nob up for his music into the sequence.

"Shut up or I'll leave you. I swear. I'm done. You dance all the time, but you forget where you get the energy."

Ferb's toes were scrunched into the metal as he gently caressed the air with his arms. The motion soothed his body downward until he sat on the floor to sulk.

A dark hum rattled throughout the ship until a voice came through: "Who is this?"

Dan responded: "System auditors for unannounced exchange inspection."

"We had auditors here last half," the voice said.

"Well, we audit the auditors."

Awkward silence took over. Ferb shrugged his shoulders, and Dan pressed his lips together to make a flat face. "Unitary Designation?" the voice condescendingly asked.

"No designation. We're here at the personal discretion of The Council."

Having nothing to hide and plenty of weapons, the voice buzzed them into the atmosphere.

As soon as Dan and Ferb exited the ship, they had spears to their throats.

"Leave!" A woman screeched in pain.

Groans and screams of agony could be heard throughout the crowd. Dan looked out of cards, and Ferb started crying.

"I'm so sorry. What's the problem?" Dan said, almost earnestly.

You spit on the King! You abuse his sensitivity and don't even think twice. His genius knows no bounds, but you want to stuff it into a can.

"My sincere apologies, we meant no offense. However, I would be remiss to not state my sustained naive confusion over our misdeeds," Dan stated.

The woman's eyes widened in violent excitement.

A 20-ish sounding feminine voice took over their ship's speakers: "No clones except the clone king. That's how it's always been. How it always will be."

Dan was startled but collected himself: "Ah, I see. We best be on our way then. We'll send for hetero-auditor-auditors."

"Yeah, well, you shoulda told us beforehand. Now it's all complicated because we like our processes. So just sit tight for me.

"What's wrong with leaving?" Ferb asked.

The ship's speakers spoke down to him: "Oh, it's not that there's anything wrong with it. It's just something that we can't do right now. Think about the King if you get bored."

please save the clone king

Dan and Ferb walked as they pleased. For 10 days, they strode down the same sandy boulevard. It felt like the stage for a procession, but it was just them. Two two-hundred-foot black banners lined each side of the street to create the illusion of inescapable heavenly cliffs. In the artificial canyon, the sun only touched them a couple minutes a day, so Ferb looked towards the light brown ground for solace.

The duo tried just about everything to move the velvet banners and make a hopeless escape: Dan lifting and Ferb crawling, both pushing, and both cursing the other off. But the things weighed like metal tons, despite looking like flowery tons. The clones could roam forward, backward, or around. But the backward just led back to the violent woman, and around was even more certain death. They kept walking through the makeshift ravine.

When they finally reached the end, two new banners stood blocking the path. They were silky. One was a man running from fire. The other showed an outlined body like a crime scene. When walking underneath the second banner, it holographed, with 532 bodies outlined atop each other. Dan and Ferb gently glided through them, like moving a dress.

On the other side stood the Clone King's vacation land. Never before had the command clones seen a more devoted city. The concrete was poured so beautifully that they forgot people lived there. The silly straw chimneys and tiny teardrop bells electrified the vagabonds:

"Can we stay?" Ferb asked.

With hopeless awe, Dan said yes.

They both kept stumbling on the streets as they stared. A wooden sign stopped them. It stood out of the grey concrete and read: *"#2/532. What do we do with that ache? Build buildings for the clone king? Build Buildings to live in? These would be misconceptions. Our structures are brittle. They fall apart too quickly to represent our devotion, but last too long to be life. But the clone king is alive, and he sees the buildings break. He serves us as a humiliating contradiction. Take the next right to see him."*

Now being tailed by people, Dan and Ferb turned right. Up the stairs they went, past the crystal pools, coat check, and kids' thank you drawings. Coolly leaning against his standing throne was Maximillian the Clone King, the 532nd.

"Hello, fellow clones," The King said chipperly. He was boyish with big bags under his eyes.

"Your graciousness," Ferb said with a satisfying curtsy-bow. Dan rolled his eyes, half in fear.

The people screeched: "No boot-licking!" Maximilian waved them off, and they huffed and puffed down the stairs. "Your auditors? What in the exchange do you audit?" he asked.

Dan responded: "Fine meats, crystals, claw-foot tubs, drugs, and textiles."

"Seems heavy on the opulence."

"That's why they sent us. It's the stuff they want to double-check."

"Do you know how many times I've ruled over this land?" The king asked.

"Uhh, 532?" Ferb said.

"Once. People love to divide and count and categorize. Boys: the older I get I only see the continuous," Maxilliman said right before taking some suspicious-looking eye drops. He took a deep breath and craned his neck up in relief. Dan and Ferb stood there, uncomfortable.

Max looked up at the stained glass dome. "Do you think they chose me for my genetics or because of my nice face? Do you think your people chose you for you?"

"Are you your face?" Ferb asked sweetly.

"I don't know. I don't know," the King confessed. Ashamed, he began to slowly draw his sword.

"Wait, it's okay. We're out." Dan said.

Max slid the sword back, slowly caressing his hilt. He spoke with a sudden, transfixed clarity: "Did you know they don't clone us from the same sample? Right after a King death, they excise a piece of skin and torch the rest. I've been taken from death, but I never die."

Ferb stood and scanned the clone king from head to toe, just to show him his presence. It took Max aback, but he continued: "After they torched the body, there was no king for 531 days. Each day, a new person tends to my flesh. You then gift it to who you least trust. And then I'm bodied." He unsheathed his sword and approached the command clones. "I'm coming to think we only truly live in that safety between sense, and the rest is absent.

Dan closed his eyes and prayed toward chaos and chance: not to change his fate, simply for his enslavement to them.

I'm sorry, it's the people's will, Max silently thought. He swung his sword at Ferb, who fully palmed it. Rainy blood ran down the arm. Ferb silently stared at it while Max looked scared.

Now, there was a dead-souled Dan, transfixed Ferb, and maddened Max, all obsessing over their own minds. But, unlike the others, Ferb believed there was no difference between himself and the space, and when Max struck him, he calmly mimicked the falling down his arm; Gravity and muscle sweetly swooned him into a downward spiral. Ferb lay there motionless but alive. It was beauty unlike anything the clone king had ever seen: *How can something be so tender yet strong?* Max tried to say. But, without the courage, he only got sad and cried. The knightly sword

fell to the ground, and he hoped the tears would purge the drugs. Ferb stayed on the ground. Dan opened his eyes. The clone king pushed his standing throne flat to the ground and curled up on the cold metal. A proclamation was whispered: "Pull whatever scam you were gonna pull. The people won't touch you."

perfect days with bad counting hours

Dan relaxed into a stained chair in the break room. He spoke to the workers, counters, and Ferb: "Gentlemen, the ever-feeling Clone King approved our purpose here. Let us devote ourselves here in his image." He gave out a queasy exhale. "Based on my expertise, you have a suspicious surplus of meat, eye drops, and gems."

"But sir, did you remember to count?" one manager said, forcefully subdued.

Dan looked at him genuinely and spoke hurtful: "Do you hate yourself so much that you can't respect the truth your eyes gift? I mean, just look at how much you have."

The man paced up and down the warehouse until Dan approached and spoke: "You stole, that's fact. But we're not prosecutors. Our oath is toward the prosperity of the Unitary, not toward its order. It'd be more expensive to send another ship than this stuff is worth. If we report you, the exchange channel would be forever gone. It's in all interests if we use what you stole in celebration of the King's love for the Council, and our love for the King."

And so for two weeks, the command clones had drugged out dinners, warm showers, and a big pile of gems. At the end of the great days, the pair would stumble their way to the villa's pond for golden hour. Dan liked to take drops on a lawn chair. His new weight stretched the cheap weaves to the ground. He'd watch Ferb skip the gems across the water (one after another). Kids liked watching them from the tall grasses and then telling everyone. Eventually, it was all just too much to bear. In contradictory love for the Clone King, the Moms and Dads placed a hit on the command clones.

please save the clone king if he wants

#52/532. Are women equal to the clone king? He's lived 52 lives, so no. Are 52 people equal to the clone king? Also, no, as his lived experience is not linear. Sometimes his life brings him back to the dirt. Other times, he falls into the unknown. This is the true beauty of our leader. He is so unwieldy and unsure, and yet he is kind to us.

Max fully leaned against the rectangle throne. Four cranes n' wires perched his platform perfectly atop his people. They stood around the fields, staring at their silent king. But they didn't look like people or ants. Clone King cracked a smile in the feeling that it was one glob of eyes and ears, but endless muscles and hair. The sun set in between his wrinkles, and he relaxed into his final thoughts:

I'm attracted to him, and I don't know why. Maybe it's because he was also a clone, but I hope it's more than that. I liked both their faces a lot, but that just feels like the pre-req. I was taught that nothing in nature is static except my body. But when Ferb was here, our love felt like fact. Like Y=Y forever.

For the rest of my life, my heart moved clunky like that. One beat for him. The next in defiance of him. The next had nothing to do with him. It all moved with precision. Finally, my equipment melted, and I can't count my love like the seconds that earned it. It all happened too late.

Then he spoke: "You killed Ferb. But if he still dances new in my head, what else might move? You all say I now return to skin. I say no."

The clone king poured gasoline on himself and lit it. The body remained still in the flames. His smoke rose, and skin crackled. Their air erupted with every sound, and the ground lost inches in mud. An ant hill of reaching bodies mounded under the king's suspended platform. Pockets of people channeled themselves to rock the cranes over, willingly crushing themselves.

Max's body fell to the ground. Spampedes stampeded over stampedes to try and inhale the soul-sodden smoke. They coughed and cried and screamed till sunrise.

One man stood up and spoke: "Smoke skin is not soul skin. We only saved the exhaust. Under the unbearable, we must relieve our faith; Perhaps his beauty lies deeper within him? We must use a non-skin sample."

His people bludgeoned him. They mummified the man's skin around Max. A carved text split the flesh: *It's beautiful to be wrong, just don't show it off.*

But their lungs recovered from the smoke. And without their leader, the homes felt too empty. They dispersed across the Unitary in aimless grief. Only the kids and elderly saw it like throwing glitter into a fan.

#532/532: We're sorry, and you can leave now (if that's what you'd like).

it's not too late!!

Daisy flew above the grey-grey city. The King's youngsters distracted Max with eye drops, dancers, and music as the ship shot down. The engine's exhaust rattled the chimneys and blew the insects off the livestock.

A whispering crowd shuffled Daisy through and out of the concrete shapes. After a nice walk, they stood on a knoll overlooking the sun-soaked pond and relaxed clone backs. It was golden hour.

"Why not do it yourselves?" Daisy asked.

The adults got glassy eyes and fell to Daisy's feet. Their hands reached toward her head, but offered nothing in their palms. A muscular man spoke: "We defy King in uncontrolled thought every day. We accept that the mind moves around and cracks our faith up. But our bodies build the houses and write our words. It's too willed to defy the king. We're not strong enough. We leave it up to the chance in your body. And the chance in theirs."

Daisy sighed and walked toward the clones. The people orbited around her like a bubble. The grassy insects drowned out the footsteps.

Dan turned back in his chair. "May we help you?" He asked, annoyed. Daisy's arm drew her sword.

Ferb stopped skipping gemstones. Dan stood up and began talking uncontrolled: "It's okay, it's not us, it's over now. I'm not a boy of luxury. It doesn't make me happy. I'm just a stubborn slave incapable of forfeiting my freedom. I can't glue myself down to anything, so I just drift. The pleasures help pass the time. It's like I'm strapped down with cheap temporary tape. We can drift away right now.

A 20-ish motherly voice replied. It was shrouded in the crowd and came from knee-height: "Stop being dramatic. The gems are always to be tossed. Not because they are useless, but because the ponds deserve them too. The meats are to be eaten, and the water warmed. You live right, but wrong for clones."

Ferb cracked a useless smile. Dan broke down. They both stared at the tadpoles and mud. After a beat, Ferb curiously spoke: "Does the Clone King's luxury offend you?"

The voice responded: "His luxury isn't life. He's so unbalanced that it reminds you his heart doesn't care. Then we stare at him and siphon his humanity. You don't see him enjoying the pond."

"Then let us leave lifeless," Dan pleaded.

The feminine figure spoke sad: "It's not just the pleasures. I see it. You flatter each other with hate and sharing. It's not fair, you're not built for union but need it." She wept and shuddered.

"What about Max? How many kings does he have in his head?" Ferb asked

The people pained at every word, but the strained figure's voice showed strength: "He is not in union. He is not a set. He is not an integer or a fraction. He is as uncountable as your feelings and as continuous as my commands. Kill one."

Daisy marched toward Dan with dead eyes. He took a sec to frantically stuff his stuff in his pockets. She swung her sword toward his crooked spine, but he dodged it and started running.

His knees awkwardly shot up to his waist as each step sank into the moggy grass. Daisy pulled out her pistol and shot him in the back. Dan lay there, paralyzed waist down.

Ferb stood and watched like he was encased in a glass box. The crowd looked away in shame. Daisy calmly trudged toward Dan's body with a switchblade. But Dan did not care for Daisy, who only felt like periphery vision. He stared at Ferb with his hand up and yelled at his subdued eyes: "So that's it? I hope to never see you again."

Staying where he stood, Ferb calmly yelled back: "You never really saw me, Dan. Your freedom isn't mine. I wish the commands sat so far away from words that they'd have their own logic. Away from contradiction and trap doors. I was commanded to captivate. I was never commanded to be with you, but here I am.

Daisy slowed her step to have Dan reply, but he was in his head with no words. His legs wanted to walk toward Ferb, and his brain was toast. He felt embarrassed, small, and wasted. When Daisy finally reached him, she froze. A hopeless prayer began in her body for everyone who didn't want to be there. The hair on her arms stood up because they wanted the beach. Her shaky hand gripped the blade, and Dan's attention didn't care. The people just wanted it to be over, but were too ashamed to command it.

Everyone waited for everyone else to move until Dan replied nicely: "I guess I never trusted time enough to stop watching it. But I couldn't count it anymore. I just wanted me to be me. I thought you were you, so I was jealous. I was robbing you, and now it's too late. I'm sorry. I'm sorry the us came too late."

Daisy dropped the knife in anguish. The moms and dads began approaching with raggedy pitchfork hearts. Ferb waved them back, and they listened. He walked up to Daisy and Dan. He held her hands while staring at his clone. "I see you're hurt," Ferb said. "You should save it for something kind. You shouldn't have to die because of us." Ferb grabbed the knife outta the mud and launched it toward his stomach. But Daisy grabbed his wrist and broke it before it happened.

Ferb exploded like never before: "Just let me have my purpose! It's not for you, I promise! I live for these moments so much I'll die for them. Dan begged tired: "It doesn't always have to be a show! You exist in me for a billion trillion reasons, and each has nothing to do with purpose. I'm already half spent, so let it kill me."

"You're a hypocrite," Ferb stated.

Dan ignored him: "It's not for love or meaning. Those would break the command for freedom. It's just common sense." Dan saw Ferb's eyes blocking off the words and knew it was too late.

All waited for a body to move, but nothing did. Knowing he already lost Ferb, Dan spoke equal parts revelation and calm: "Ferb. Mystery is the most captivating. Go off into nowhere and never

come back. If you still want to die, die. If you want to live, live knowing the mystery of your life is the most captivating thing we can bear.”

Daisy, Dan, and Ferb looked toward the people. The new dusk camouflaged them into a blobby clump. The four-foot figure emerged from the mass. They had a cut jaw and plump skin. A graphic T of a mountain dropped down on them like a dress. The mountain was surrounded by fire. The high up streams drained into clouds of vague steam.

They pinched the baggy shirt out and looked down on it. Their body said don't worry and they told the rest with childish caution: “I don't wanna be dramatic, but I've never even thought about the other side of the mountain. I never had to. Could be special 0D land or layers and layers of detail to mine. Sometimes instinct should leash up curiosity.”

They let their shirt settle and stared at Ferb. “This is acceptable. But you go to that other side. You go somewhere you'll never be able to get out. Your other half will stay here. If you come back, we'll kill the whole thing.”

“It's not mercy, by the way. Clones don't live in union. If you live, the rotten remains can't be excavated. You'll think about each other and call it love and being alive. But we only see a confusing mess of will and ego. It's a cautionary tale so half alive it's even told cautiously.” They then walked off back to the city.

Ferb stared at Dan, and Dan gazed at Ferb. They felt nothing but their instructions and love. Ferb looked out at the land. He picked a direction and walked off onto the arid fields. He didn't think about everyone watching him. If he knew where he was going, he would have told the tadpoles.

cold syrup and chatting

1 Private Prison apartment
1 chimney for oil fumes
1 double vanity sink
A lot of smooth concrete
1 one-way window.

This is such a weird air (Dan)
The type that's a stale bread you never tried before (Daisy)
I wish we shared more than space (Dan)
I think that's enough (Daisy)
It'll hold us over till dinner
Normal silence and outside hollering (world)
Let me know when I get annoying (Daisy)
Don't worry about it (Dan)
Yeah you don't need to worry about that (Dan)

I wouldn't worry about that I think (Dan)
We shouldn't worry about that

Kids dripped sap from the roof onto the prison bars. They weren't sure if it was a prank or kind
prank.

0/how many it takes

A woman crouched over a fire as she stared into sizzling meat.

"Why is fire hot?" her child asked.

"Because God gave it for death. There was a handsome and muscular man called Butele. He loved with a King's daughter. When the men found out, Butele ran and ran and ran. They tracked his footsteps until the tiny waves of a river washed them into puddled ovals. Butele was on the other side, sitting on sand. The river was angered by his crossing, and the rapids roared. The men couldn't swim it.

Hours passed as they waited for the water to cool temper. Butele did not move. Miles of tree-grass surrounded him. Each strand was 15 feet high, blocking his view of the mountain. Without seeing it, Butele could not find home.

He had a choice: die tired and lost in the hot grass, or by the misty river. He chose the river, and waited for the King's men to cross. When the men began crossing, God struck the first bolt of light from the sky. He aimed for Butele. But Butele had chosen to look at the stars before death. He dodged the bolt, and the sandy grass caught the light. God had chosen the light of light. It was so bright it turned everything into itself. King's men ran for fear as the Earth became the Sun's sun. The light reflected against the snow cap of the peak. And so, a big white beacon shone down on the land. Butele ran across the sparks and ashes of the blackened land to safety. But God was not trying to save him or punish him for the sex. When Butele sat amongst the stars and waited for death, God spoke in disgust: "Better to die with exhaustion than wait."

The woman gave her kid the meat. She watched the juice drip down their identical chin and wrapped it up:

"I think Butele escaped to his city and began to truly love the lord for their hot air invention. But they say fire didn't stop. It grew and got faster. Eventually, it took over the whole land, burning Butele and his city toward a black-grey mix. The survivors ran up the mountain to safety. Seasons passed as the fire burned. First from the plants and then from the black swamps that wouldn't quit being black. The stuff burned so well and long and came from down in the ground. It was so terribly odd that some thought God and Earth were in cahoots to crush them. As the months dragged on, the Mountain Queen the 1st. gave birth. The baby looked like Butele. At first, she was able to protect her child. At second, the people overpowered their beloved ruler. In tribute and revelation for an end, they placed the child in the cold mountain stream. He wound

and weaved down the mountain toward the flames. The child, not knowing his fate, blew bubbles in the water and watched the fish wiggle. After too long, they got deposited in the black swamps. But they lived. At the door to his last moments, it rained. Steam filled the Prince's lungs, and the child-placers slipped on the sleek rocks. The Mountain Queen wailed and threw her jewelry in the air. 'Why did you wait so long?!?' She pleaded."

"She didn't know 'the all-powerful god is all power in power but not in will.' God watched the baby wash away into ruin, but didn't know how to stop it. Knowing they failed their mandate, they cried and filled the Earth with lovely rain. She gave up being a failed mother to be a great mother. God gave up mad lighting. She gave up the throne and, in the sun, cast her son as Maximillian the 1st. I think he's doing alright."

[illegible]

#0: You very much deserve someone to disagree with. But a ruler can only have followers and more devoted followers. Royal siblings are not brothers and never sisters, and royal clones will only make you red and jealous. We'll clone you when you die, yes. That way, you can just disagree with yourself, without killing yourself over it.