

OPINION

Talking about cloning my aunt



MARIUS MELAND

If they're going to begin cloning people," I told my friend Shankar. "I hope they'll be cautious about the kind of people they pick."

I had been invited to dinner at Shankar's house. We were talking about the recent cloning of a human embryo.

"Just imagine," I said, "if they cloned my Aunt Elisabeth. Frankly, I think that God had a reason to only put one sample of aunt Elisabeth on the surface of the earth. A very good reason, too, mind you."

"Is she the one with all the husbands?" Shankar asked.

I nodded. "Seven, on the last count, though I hear she's getting married again this Christmas. Of her seven ex-husbands, one threw himself in front of the subway train, two were admitted to a mental institution, and one moved to the Easter Islands to set up a medical practice, after finding out that the Easter Islands were the point geographically farthest away from my aunt."

"And then there's my barber's brother, Jonathan," I said. "If they cloned him, it would be a natural disaster worse than those fires down in California. He's got the most morbid sense of humor in the history of humankind. Did you hear what he did for Halloween?"

"I heard the story," Shankar said, "but I didn't think it could be true."

"It was. Believe me, I saw it with my own eyes. For Halloween, he actually dug up his own mother, who was buried in his back yard, and hung her on a string in front of his house. When the trick-or-treaters saw the decomposed corpse, they got so scared that they called the police."

"I didn't think he'd ever go that far. Just the thought of another Jonathan gives me the shivers," Shankar said. "But I know some people who would make pretty good clones. Imagine if they took some extremely talented people, such as Ernest Hemingway and John Lennon, and put them into the cloning machine."

"And then there's the military," I said. "They'd never have to draft anyone again. They'd just have to make a million clones of Colin Powell, and we'd have an

army of superior soldiers."

"Not to mention the girls, of course," Shankar said. "Think about that girl down at the coffee place, for example. Or the girl at the circulation desk at the library. Or the GTF for my ecology class. They'd be perfect for cloning."

"You're right," I said. "I know some girls I would love to multiply. Just think of it: If we took Cindy Crawford and made a million copies of her, perhaps regular guys such as you and me would stand a chance. Statistically speaking, I mean."

"Exactly. And for those who prefer the more cerebral type, we could clone Janet Reno or Hillary Rodham Clinton. How great: a nation filled with beautiful, intelligent, charming women!"

For a moment there, we thought we had solved all of the problems of the world, theoretic-

cally speaking. But then a shadow fell upon Shankar's face.

"But there's a problem, you know," he said.

"What could be the problem with a world of perfect women?"


"Well, think about it: If we can do it to them, there's no stopping them from doing it to us."

"You mean they'd clone Tom Cruise and Mel Gibson and John F. Kennedy Jr. and guys like that?"

"Of course they would," Shankar said. "And where do you think we would stand in a world filled with perfect men?"

The room was utterly quiet. Finally, Shankar broke the silence and said, "You know, I don't think this cloning business is such a good idea after all."

Marius Meland is a columnist for the Emerald.



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