

## Tomorrow’s Heir

When Trump was president attempts were made to pass laws defining a legal marriage as that solely between a man and a woman. The attempts failed and the separation of fundamentalist doctrine and state was maintained. However, the rich and powerful succeeded in crushing scientific claims about climate change. It wasn’t that they were against science, *per se*, just science that interfered with their investments and short-term profits.

Old money, BIG old money wanted their investments to grow and live on. Towards the end of his first term the President confidently claimed in closed meetings a divine right to the office. The quiet oligarchy behind the throne ignored him and returned to what was felt was their real challenge: how to live on along with their investments. Federal funds were granted to further research into the science of cloning – the ultra-rich hoping to greet their genetic equivalent in the not too distant future. Eventually a single cell with the donor’s DNA was successfully grown in a sterile artificial womb to viable maturity – all done in secret. Money had indeed worked miracles!

Those with adequate resources and the right connections were able to replicate themselves. Rearing their offspring was a challenge. One inflated ego confronting the expected mirror image of her/himself often led to violent arguments. New issues continually surfaced, many of them ending up in court, especially when there was a mix of offspring – the natural and cloned varieties.

When Donald Huffmann, the older, died, rights to his considerable estate were litigated in court. His traditional offspring confronted their genetically identical father, Donald Huffmann, the younger.

Judge M. R. Pence took his seat behind the bench. He was withered and grey, with deep crevices and thick wrinkles spreading across his face as if he had scribed in them verses of religious texts for all to read. His gavel came down with full force on the sounding block. He nodded at both lawyers. A small smile escaped as his gaze lingered for a moment on the one representing Donald, the younger.

The natural children claimed that the estate should belong to them and them alone. Their lawyer argued that inheritance implies a “passing” down and that Donald, the younger [DTY], not being under their father’s name on any genealogical chart, had no vested interest in his estate. “There are no connecting lines or even dotted lines to DTY. DTY, since he’s no different from the deceased, cannot inherit himself.”

This line of argument had been anticipated. DTY’s lawyer smiled. “In that case, it’s as if he never died and there being no essential difference between the dearly departed and this young man standing before the court, the estate is still his and lives on *in* him.”

The arguments went back and forth all morning and resumed after the lunch break. Precedents were offered by both sides later in the afternoon.

The judge, staring at the clock on the back wall, banged his gavel, and said that the court would resume the next morning at 10 AM.

That night he called DTY on an encrypted phone and whispered, “We got us a problem. You and your lawyer better come over – use the underground entry. I’m sure we’ll be able to figure this out between us. We need to be sure to work in total coordination on the issue of inheritance.”

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