

FOUL

by Eric Boyd

Dana Weinstein, whose pet dog died last year, has spent nearly \$50,000 over the last six months to clone her precious Chinese pug, Yu, so she could have 'Yu Too'.

"It's definitely not for most people," said Dana about her extreme measures to recreate her pet. "No other dog could rcreate [her dog, Yu], so I decided to recreate him myself...it was something that I wanted to do."

I closed the newspaper and put it back under the table.

I was at the plasma center uptown. What in the hell is wrong with people? I thought. Cloning dogs? Here I was, Fredrick Anderson, donating plasma on a Sunday, the second donation that week. Cloning dogs. Bah. I'd be getting thirty dollars, minus bus fare. Along with the fifteen from two days earlier, I'd have about forty dollars to last me the week. Meanwhile women were running around cloning dogs.

When I did have a job, I made less than twelve thousand dollars a year. This lady was spending fifty thousand. For a Chinese dog. Didn't she know how much was wrong with the world already? Did we really need mutant dogs crawling around our shopping malls and banquet dinners, too? Didn't she see how high unemployment was? Didn't she know the war was still on? People were dying out there. Didn't she know Ben had died?

No. She didn't know about Ben, I figured.

Ben Carletta was a friend of mine. We met at the plasma center over a year earlier. He was tall and gaunt. He wore suits to the center,

understanding that even a man scraping by could look respectable. A man didn't have to be a bum to need. Everyone needs.

"Did you read the paper today?" I asked him one day. Ben usually ended up at the donating bed next to mine.

"No, I don't read the paper much."

"The president said he's going to O.K. funding for stem cell research."

"That's awful," Ben said. "Don't they take those cells from little fetuses?"

"They used to, but they can just take them from people's bones, now."

"I don't know," he said. "I don't think I want anyone messing with my bones."

That day, Ben and I walked downtown and watched a baseball game across the river, at the stadium. Ben seemed loopy. Donating was bad, and walking a mile afterwards didn't help. Ben complained that his stomach hurt. That was normal, I said.

Someone hit a splasher into the river. A man fishing in a boat jumped into the water to retrieve it. Everyone cheered the homerun hitter. We cheered the guy in the river.

Ben told me, after he paid his bills and everything else, that maybe he'd buy a ticket for a game. I agreed to save some money as well. We could go together.

"Fredrick, we'll get seats in the bleachers!" Ben smiled. "They're cheap, but they get a lot of pop-ups, a lot of foul balls."

"The tickets should be cheap, I said. "Our team is a bunch of bums. Sounds like fun, though."

We shook hands and parted. Walking back downtown, I turned around and saw Ben crossing the bridge to the other side of the river. I saw him adjust his suit jacket.

Ben died from malnutrition a week after that. The rumor at the center was that he was living off of the crackers and juice he got after donating.

I finished donating, received my thirty dollars, and left. Thinking of Ben made my head hurt. I didn't have that many friends. How could he go like that? I never thought he was ill, just loozy, weak.

I decided to take a later bus, if there were any on Sundays, and walk downtown. I wanted to watch a baseball game. The ticket was only nine dollars. It was a long game; there was no way I would make a bus. Oh well. I'd figure something out. Sitting on the third-base side, alone in the bleachers, I wondered how much a nice suit jacket at the thrift store would cost. Then I imagined how long it'd be before they could clone humans.

During the ninth inning I caught a foul ball. We ending up losing the game.

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