“Samantha? Sam, can you come in here?” I heard as I walked past Lacey’s door. I walk in to answer her. Her room still looks like the way it usually does. With many beautiful pictures of places all over the world like the Giza Pyramids, the Eiffel Tower, Taj Mahal, the Bahamas, the Amazon, the list goes on. Her desk is decorated with little snow globes and dolls. It’s also piled with novels that she spends the majority of her free time reading. Lacey has a lot of free time because whenever she’s too sick to do anything, she gets me to do it for her.

I look at Lacey. She doesn’t look so good today, she looks pretty sick. Her face paler than usual, her eyes staring into the air vacantly. She’s been looking sicker and sicker recently, I told myself. “Yeah?” I answer

 “Can you go to school for me today? I have a really bad headache,” Lacey said politely.

 “Yeah, I’ll go get dressed.”

 “Thank you so much.”

 I closed Lacey’s door and went back to my room to get dressed. Unlike most families, Lacey and I actually have different clothes instead of identical ones. I picked a pair of skinny jeans and put a hoodie over my head. Today is a warm day, no need for anything extra. I see the Patrick’s Circle that is sewed onto my clothes, the painful reminder that I am one of them.

I go into the washroom and brush my teeth. Even though everyone else in this family showers in the morning, I like to shower at night. I prefer to go to bed with a clean body. As I look into the mirror, I see that familiar face that isn’t really mine. Dark hair down to my shoulders, dark eyes that look kind of lazy, average looking face with olive skin and a face that is neither fat nor skinny.

 After brushing my teeth, I walked down the stairs and into the kitchen for breakfast. Sara was pouring cereal into her bowl while Bob was spreading peanut butter on his toast. “Good morning Sara, Bob,” I said. Sara look up, “Good morning to you,” she said,” where’s Lacey?”

 “Oh, she said she’s feeling sick and told me to go to school for her,” I answered.

 “’Told’? As in demand?” Bob asked sharply.

 “Oh, no, not demand, she asked politely.”

 “Oh good,” Bob said, “If she demanded you, we will make sure she uses her manners.”

 “Don’t worry, she always does,” I said.

 “Help yourself with whatever you like. I am going to check on Lacey,” Sara said.

 “Okay, thank you.”

 I go to the counter and see muffins. I picked it up and ate it. I love muffins, preferably the blueberry kind, although really, I’d eat any. I settled down on the dining table with Bob as he read the morning paper. “How did you sleep last night?” Bob asked.

 “Oh quite well, thank you. How about you?” I asked.

 “Ah, you know I always sleep well. It probably explains my big belly. Ha ha! Would you like to read the paper?”

 “Oh, no thank you. I don’t want to out a “late” on Lacey’s attendance.

 “Oh, don’t worry about it. I’m sure no one will mind.”

 “Thank you,” I said. And that is how we ended our awkward conversation.

 Sara and Bob have always been a little uneasy and uncomfortable with interacting with me. But who am I to say that? I also feel discomfort when being with them, which is why I call them “Sara” and “Bob” instead of mom and dad. I’ve never felt quite right to call them “Mom” or “Dad” even though technically speaking they are, well, kind of anyways.

 I finished up my muffin and went to the fridge for my meds. The red pill and the green pill are for mornings, which is now so I swallow them. Then, I pack the orange and the green one for lunch so I can take them at school. Bob said he already packed my lunch, or what was supposed to be Lacey’s lunch on the counter. I grabbed my backpack and left the house.

 School is fifteen minutes away by foot, which isn’t too far, so usually I walk. Lacey walks when she is feeling good, which rarely happens. I walk because I need to exercise so I can live longer. As I walk down the familiar streets, I enjoy the warm weather. I like hot, warm weather instead of the freezing sub-zero temperature in the winter. Lacey likes it for some reason, even though her weak body can’t really withstand it. Not that my body is any stronger than hers, it is for now, but I age much faster. In a matter of time, I will start to develop health problems that people my age rarely have. Generally, I age twice as fast as normal humans. By the time I’m twenty I’ll be like a person who’s forty. When I become forty I’ll be walking around like a grandma. It’ll be a miracle for me to survive to my fifties.

“Hey, Lacey!” I hear someone call behind me. I really hate it when people mistaken me as Lacey. I know I can’t really blame them for it, since we look identical, we’re supposed to be that way. “I’m not Lacey,” I tell the girl who was calling me Lacey.

 “Oh, you’re her clone…” she said. Her eyes go to the symbol of “Patrick’s Circle” and trailed off. “Oh right, of course. Okay,” she said as she ran off. I didn’t expect anything different, really. That’s how most people look at clones. They mistaken them as the original person, find out that they’re talking to the clone by seeing Patrick’s Circle, look at us like we’re from Mars and ignore us. I didn’t give that much thought since that’s how I was treated for my entire life.

 All clones must have “Patrick’s Circle” sewed onto our clothes. This is like the ID for clones. It’s basically a circle with a capital “P” in it. The reason why the symbol is called “Patrick’s Circle” is because the first of our kind was named Patrick. He was the first successful human clone. He is very different from clones like me these days, since he died after 3 years of creation due to complications with cell structure and organ failure. Cloning technology wasn’t very advanced back in the 22nd century, but now in the 24th century, cloning technology is very advanced and not as expensive. Most families that are or above middle class can afford it.

 As I continue walking, I see my good friend Marissa Hayes walking too. I called out to Marissa. I used to have to go up to her and identify whether she is Marissa or Avery, Marissa’s owner. But I immediately knew that it was Marissa, and not Avery, because I saw the symptoms. Not only did I see the symptoms, I also saw Patrick’s Circle sewed onto her clothes, confirming that she is Marissa. I walk up to her and say hi again.

 “Hi, Sam! I’m so glad to see you!” she greeted me.

 I look at my best friend’s short blond hair and grey eyes. Well, they look pretty grey to me, but Marissa insists that she has blue eyes. Even though she and Avery share the same features, recently, there is a certain weariness and tiredness to Marissa’s eyes, the way she looks, even her entire aura. She wasn’t so skinny earlier, but these days, she’s been getting skinnier and bonier. She doesn’t say it, but I know what is causing this. Avery’s family must be mistreating her these days, Avery’s parents, Mr. and Mrs. Hayes aren’t exactly the nicest people to clones, not that most people are anyway.

 I’m one of the lucky clones. There are various reasons why I am a lucky clone. One, my reason of existence is different than most clones. The majority of clones exist to do what their owners don’t want to do, whether it is chores, school, work, etc. I exist because Lacey has leukemia, and therefore sometimes cannot perform certain tasks or go to school. Usually Bob and Sara get her to do things on her own, in the hopes of Lacey being independent one day, but when Lacey is ill (she quite often is), I do those things for her. Bob and Sara treat me nicely. They give me good food, and I get to eat meals with them, even though Sara doesn’t have the best cooking and Bob always burns everything that he attempts to cook. My clothes are different than Lacey’s, which is a really big deal. Many clones have the same clothes as their owner because they’re the owner’s clone, and are therefore supposed to be a substitute for the owner, thus, many owners do not allow clones to have their own clothes. I get to go out even when it’s not for Lacey. My life is much more luxurious than other clones. Marissa is a classic example. She would be malnourished if it were not for the supplements that she takes, since her the Hayes feed her with so little food that has no nutritional value. She has to do all the chores in the house. By all the chores I mean from dishwashing to brushing snow off the roof; although I think once Marissa almost fell off the roof so the Hayes decided not to risk letting her fall off and dying. If Marissa falls off, there is a pretty high chance that she will die. Dying means if Avery wants another clone, they have to make another one, and making another clone is just more work.

Marissa has no belongings except for essential items like her own toothbrush; everything else she shares with someone else. But then sharing rarely happens because Marissa barely has any free time (because of the chores) and she has so little freedom. Everywhere except the washroom is off limits, she can only enter the dining room during meal time to pick up her meal, after she picks it up, she heads straight back to her room. Speaking of which, her room isn’t exactly a room. Her room is more like a fenced little corner in the attic. I’ve been to her room once to help her family with spring cleaning. It was a filthy little fenced corner of the attic. The fence is like those fences to keep your pet rabbit in a certain spot. Marissa’s corner has a cover that keeps her somewhat warm at night. She has the pleasant company of rats and other animals in her fenced corner. How does one live like that, you might be asking. Well, see, as I said earlier, she spends most of her time doing chores or running errands, she rarely spends her time up in the attic, if any. For the most part, her fenced corner is for sleeping purposes.

So there you have it, the average clone’s life is pretty pathetic. Yes, I know, it sounds like Cinderella or something like that. Boo hoo, I’m a clone, and I have such a sad life. I have to do chores all day long and I don’t get much food, yada yada. But it’s true, the majority of us don’t have much of a life, and we don’t get a Prince Charming to come save us.

“Why isn’t Avery coming to school today?” I asked Marissa.

“The usual, she wants to hang out with her friends, so she gets me to go to school for her,” Marissa replied.

You’d think that Avery’s parents want her to learn. The truth is Avery’s parents don’t care too much because for one, the Hayes are wealthy, therefore schooling is unnecessary, and two, even if the Hayes were poor, they could just get Marissa to go out and work for them. Many families do that; you’d think that perhaps one clone isn’t enough to sustain the whole family, but in certain families, it’s not just one clone, even parents have clones. Even though the parents’ clones are old (remember, we age twice as fast as normal humans), they still get their clones to go out and work, because that is our sole purpose and reason of existence, to do what people don’t want to do.

“What about Lacey?” Marissa asked, “Why isn’t she coming to school today?”

“She’s not feeling well,” I answered.

“As she always is,” said Marissa. As I looked at her face, I couldn’t help but think that she looked sicker than she was yesterday. I knew that this was none of my business but I still couldn’t resist the urge to ask Marissa what happened after the last time we met. Finally, I just couldn’t stand it anymore and I asked her “Mariss,” I said, calling Marissa by her nickname that only I use “has anything happened lately? You look different than you were before. You look….” And then I trailed off, I didn’t know what to say.

Marissa looked at me with fake confusion, “I look what? Sick? Is that what you wanted to say? Sam, don’t be ridiculous now. I am perfectly healthy.” She moved her legs and arms around to prove her statement. I looked at her and decided to investigate even further. “Marissa, I know that no school offers courses in lying, but if the opportunity ever presents itself, you should enroll in a lying course. If not, you can always find me to tutor you in that, it’s a very valuable asset to have.” Marissa looked at me blankly, just as she does every time when I use sarcasm on her.

“What did you say?” she asked.

Uhh, she just never gets it.

“What I meant to say was: You’re a terrible liar. There’s something up, is it the Hayes? Have they been feeding you? What is going on?” I asked, staring straight into her eyes, knowing that this would make her apprehensive and therefore, spill the truth.

“Shush!” Marissa said, “I’m not allowed to talk about it. It’s Forbidden Talk, okay? Just stop it.”

“Oh,” I said, regretting that I pushed it on Marissa. Forbidden talk is, well, forbidden to talk about amongst clones. Talking about it could result in great penalty. You could be sent to court and potentially be executed for Forbidden Talk. Forbidden Talk forbidden negative comments about your owner or being a clone.