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Doubled

Tommy E. Hart

Dartmouth College, Thomas.E.Hart.19@dartmouth.edu

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Cover Page Footnote

*This piece was written as a branch piece to Lily's "The Kevins". A branch piece is read during workshop as a piece inspired by that week's trunk piece.

Doubled

As Kevin lay down, he knew, that even though his guts might splatter against the walls of the machine, it was for the best. Not the splattering. Well, maybe the splattering. The splattering didn't need to occur, strictly speaking. The insurance should pay out either way. But the splattering could help if the insurance company wouldn't pay; all his daughters would have to do would be to publish a photo in the news or online or make some sort of tweet with it, and tag the insurance company, along with relevant lines from the policy. The company would be scared of the bad press and send along a check. Besides, then they wouldn't have to pay for a funeral, probably. More money for his progeny.

The countdown began and Kevin could feel the tension in the room which swallowed his and which observed him so closely. The staff were excited for medical discovery. Kevin might be excited too, except that he hadn't really been excited in nearly a year. The last time he had felt excitement, or really anything good at all, was the last time he had seen his daughters. It hadn't even been planned. He'd been driving his big rig to the Albuquerque Sam's Club, and as he had stopped at a red stop light, a car pulled up in the turn lane beside him. In it was his former wife, distracted by the smart phone which lay on her right thigh, and his two daughters, unmistakable by the red bows set upon jet black hair. He gazed at the trio for some time, forgetting the light entirely. His daughters, only, well, he forgot how old they were. Probably no more than twelve he would say. But maybe younger. But they were beautiful nonetheless. He couldn't see their eyes because they didn't look up to where he sat, but he was sure they shone brightly. Kevin was so captured by their beauty that he went to grab his phone – he must remember this; he must not forget – only to watch the left-turn signal become green, and the distracted mother be driven forth by the horn of the car behind her. He didn't even get a photo of the back of the car as it sped off.

Since then, and before then, Kevin had felt a loneliness which he had hid

from the doctors and everyone else who had tried to ask. He knew he would never see his daughters again, and, feeling that his life had become pointless, had contemplated ending it all. But he couldn't do that to himself, and he couldn't do that to the daughters who so clearly needed his help. So he had signed on with the esteemed Doctor Anthony Johnson, a total quack, to do it in a more established fashion. He felt confident that it was of course the most legitimate way to help his daughters – he would die a hero of science, or something to the effect, at least, of an explorer on the frontier. Maybe his daughters would see him as a role model. And of course, the insurance company would honor a claim if the experiment went wrong. So his life insurance could be paid out to his daughters. They would have the perfect father – a role model and a provider.

Kevin felt no excitement, not even as the team counted down past ten and down to zero. At zero he felt a sudden last minute panic – he didn't want to die, he wanted to see his daughters red bows turn to graduation caps and wedding veils and - then all went black for a few moments. He woke up, though, having remembered his panic, and suddenly was very grateful to be alive. He felt like an explorer who, having returned home from a storm ridden voyage, alive and in one piece – well at any rate he would never return to this room again. He would go back to trucking – he had quit his job but could find another one. He would gladly resume paying child support. He could find meaning somewhere. He would never make this mistake again. There were better ways to make a living.

Amidst these near-death induced revelations, Kevin heard a tone, and then the middle of a conversation, which was hard to follow: “- yes and hello Johnny was take bath San Francisco,” essentially just a garble of words from the outside room; someone must have accidentally activated the intercom. This caused Kevin some frustration as it needlessly interrupted his serendipity. He inwardly wished for a brief moment that he had been splattered, before deciding once more the foolishness of his action and decided to mostly just drown out what he was hearing. He thought once more of his daughters and how he would become a shout interrupted his thoughts “What? A COPY OF HIM IN

SACRAMENTO? WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE?” and suddenly Kevin no longer thought of his daughters.

He thought instead of the bills. If there were two of him that would mean double the food, double the utility payments, double the rent. No doubt his taxes would be double too. His child support and alimony, damn those daughters of his, why did he ever think kindly of them, those would be doubled as well. No doubt, he'd have to pay double on his life insurance.

Kevin felt his heart begin to rapidly beat and he felt for a moment alive, powerful, and in control of his destiny. He also felt helpless against the man who would surely press down onto him and force him to do more to cover himself. He felt stupid for having tried to manipulate the system. He cursed the fates which had led him into this trap. But then he felt again that he could succeed, if only, if only, and then he saw only blackness.

Outside the room, the doctor in charge called for EMTs and paramedics and all the like, but nothing would resuscitate Kevin. He felt panic, and was not able to even rest confident in the fact that the other Kevin had survived; a phone call from Sacramento told him he was dead.

Outside the hospital, the protestors claimed victory as what had happened was clearly unnatural and the doctor, and the patient, had experienced their just desserts. In the following weeks, those who kept up with the morning paper would see a curious little point of news: The two daughters of Kevin (Deceased) would be receiving not only one, but two, life insurance payouts; the man who bought the insurance having died twice, and having two death certificates, two dead bodies, and the like. Of course, the insurance company was said to be fighting it, but having not listed it in their policy, were expected to be compelled to pay out the full amount two times – one for each death. The company would be changing their policy, but it just goes to show, some people would say, it just goes to show.