

Designing Dionysius Rex

By Dennis Payton Knight

Dear Scientists and Mixologists at Clonings Unlimited:

Congratulations on your recent successes in the field of hybrid cloning. While I am unfamiliar with your current catalogue, I've heard you are churning out new specimens all the time, and your facility is just what I am looking for.

What first brought my attention to Clonings Unlimited is a creature I observed grazing in a cornfield recently with your logo branded prominently on its rump. The beast had the general form of a dairy cow, but a very large nose, and it barked. The spots and jowls led me to the conclusion it was a Holstein mixed with the DNA of a bloodhound, and she seemed to be able to distinguish sweet corn from dried up, even happily rooting out grain in the fermentation stage. I'm sure whatever milk she is producing is way better than Grade A, and a boon to the fortunes of one smart farmer.

What I wish to acquire from your experts is a hybrid mainly of hippopotamus and cephalopod, which is a fancy name for squid. I would also like to add smatterings of raccoon and the fulvous whistling duck, and it would help if you could get DNA from the racehorse American Pharoah at a reasonable price.

I specify the hippo mostly for its *gluteus* very *Maximus*, which I understand is where a mammal's sense of humor resides. I figure the bigger the funnier. I specify the squid for its brains and for its multitude of long arms, but I must decline the ink option as I am plenty messy by myself.

The raccoon will bring cuteness, curiosity and personality. Although the fulvous duck doesn't add much, he can whistle, and I can't. American Pharoah's DNA will provide speed, the will to win, and compliment my good looks. Unfortunately, he has raced through life with his name misspelled, but he won the Triple Crown anyway. It matters not, because I have a spellchecker.

I could name it (or she or he, depending on how you mix up the genes) for one of my ancestors or some admired author, but I am the inventor, even if you are building it, so I will call it *Dionysius Rex*, after me. It is very classy if I do say so myself, *Dionysius* being Greek for *Dennis* and *Rex* being Latin for *King*, which is one step up from Knight.

Maybe you want to know what my *Dionysius Rex* will do. As I have said, the hippopotamus will contribute the humor stored in its backside, the squid its brains and arms, the raccoon its personality, and the horse its speed and attitude. If I teach those long squid arms touch typing and how to use Google, and if I can convince the brains to write funny, profound things on deadline every week, and do it in five hundred words, old *Dionysius* will soon carry me off to fame and my first Pulitzer Prize.