All of this shit is you and me, like it or not.

That too: a strand of dinosaur code, bred for big breasts. No product of love, though maybe primal lust, maybe even carnal lust, but not the million-year-old ritual of bird reproduction; just the spunk in a Petri dish, the RNA separated, twisted and rearranged, reproduced ad infinitum. You were not created to be unique or abnormal--quite contrary: there are meant to be billions of you, exact copies, an eternal flesh to feed the material world.

That's later. First, you have to start dividing from one cell into 2, 4, 8, and so on. You become bones, a spine, organs, blood - and none of this is possible without your heating lamps. If you had a brain yet, you might have lingeringly remembered that warm cocoon, that best time of life, that can't even yet be considered life.

You are a body, with wings and a mouth, and you crack through your egg because now that you have a mouth, throat, a stomach and an anus, you have to get something in there. You cry out for the something - the someone - your code tells you that you come from. Emerging from the egg, there is a blinding light, and amidst a search for the someone you come from, you are already near buried in your copies. Dozens of newly hatched yous, screaming for a mother you all don't have. Some of the other yous have scrambled one way, and using legs to step for the first time, you're all crowding around water, and other pellets to put inside them. These things are good, there is no question, but perhaps you all still feel that absence, that missing piece of where you come from.

You're in a crate with dozens of other yous, but quickly enough, purple gloved hands pass through ranks, searching, like a tidal wave, the rest of the Divine hand, finding one of you that was born with a bad leg. The gloves twist the neck and toss it out of sight. After the purple gloves find another two, the sky above your world swerves and your sense of weight and gravity is changed forever, and the world of your crate moves and moves, and finally closes in. There is no more sky, and all directions are just an infinite mirror of crates filled with feathery, yellow yous, piled in on top of each other. You can't even fathom that your heart has been beating too fast since you emerged from your egg. You and all the other infinite yous are panicked, in flight mode with nowhere to fly. Eventually, it might turn you into such an absolute exhaustion that you lose your small, terrible Consciousness for a time. But it comes back, because you don't know how to kill yourself, or if that's an option. An easy obsession in the dark of your scrambling, endless crate is to fixate on the feeling in your body of craving satisfaction, of putting the things in your mouth.

After a time, there is a light again, and the crates full of you unloaded, space above is too big to even comprehend, and more space than you know what to do with. You're surrounded by yourself on all sides, once again you follow yourselves flocking to the only thing you know to flock for, and there it is, the things to put in your mouth, and enough of it forever.

Perhaps the bad part is over now. All you know, you, a body, is that there is here the thing to fill you. You fill yourself until it hurts, and you sit, then you shit and piss, and fall asleep in the same spot. You know nothing else, but that missing piece remains in your body as well.

Then the gods come in. They search through your various selves, and look for the ones who can't walk.

You are made of meat, and growing bigger by the day. Moving is necessary, but not enjoyed. You are always too warm, inside, on your own skin, to the point of a chilly fever. You see others of you stop moving or eating entirely, the gods come and pick those ones Up and Away. The gods also pick up ones that are living in, those struggling, and the you and their hands is screaming, clapping, screaming, and the twist the neck, and then there on the ground, flapping their wings, flapping, flapping, and slowly resting, never moving again.

You are always hot, your joints always ache, and your body feels too heavy to move. You crane your beak to the water tube covered in piss and shit, and you eat the seed that is half of your own shit, and you recycle yourself, unable to do anything else, and you always feel hot and cold at once.

One day, you and the others of you left are scooped up at once by a truck, sealed in, moved again. The place is big and made of shiny metal, and the gods wear the purple gloves again. They hang you by your feet and you all flap flap flap As you move in a line. A procession of yourselves toward the moment you have no way of anticipating. Your head passes through water, and there is a shock that shorts out your brain.

But you're still there, because you were only ever meat. With your brain without a charge, the heart stops pumping, the blood stops flowing, and there's no more movement within. There are no nerve endings to tell you you're in pain when your throat is slit to drain your blood in a clean way. Once it's drained, your head is severed and thrown away, to be incinerated. Your heavy breasts are stripped from your skeleton, wings and legs pulled from the joints, the liver saved, but the rest tossed. You are not one thing anymore, if you ever were.

You are breast, freeze-dried, bundled with dozens of your other breast, wrapped in plastic and packed in cardboard with dry ice. You travel for 20 hours, from Ontario to a distributor in Westchester, from there to Manhattan. Your packaging is opened, the plastic unwrapped and thrown away, and you're thrown into a microwave. It's vibrating your atoms into activity and half of your proteins dissipate in the vibration -- but you're warm inside. Next, you're in the cornstarch in the breading, and the deep fryer. The oil seeps in every strand of you, the flesh. You emerge and purple gloves toss you in a sauce from a petri dish, then you are tossed onto a steel grill with dozens of yourselves, under an electric, red light, very similar to the one that incubated you. The purple glove picks you up and drops you in cardboard and then paper, and it's not long before a pink, ungloved hand guides you into the mouth.

Parts of you swirl around the tongue, parts and mashed and thrashed by the teeth. the tongue Savers the sauce here in, in the fryer oil dripping from the flesh that soaked it up. Whole chunks slip down the esophagus, into a pile of potatoes half-digested, stomach acid breaking you down into more and more parts. Fat, protein, carbohydrates, so, as well as bacteria and many smaller living things. As fat, you join the fat stored in the gut, but also the brain, sodium slipped into the bloodstream.

You are a body who thinks that it’d be so funny to stick your tongue down this chick's throat after eating KFC.

You are a body that calls itself Jeremy Riven. You would do everything all at once, if you could. Right now, you're shoving BBQ crispy fried chicken breast into your mouth, texting this girl you’ve fucked three times now to tell her you're on the way and you’re so excited to see her. with a blushing Emoji, walking through Midtown past the homeless without a second thought, you’re talking to your copywriting partner about the Predator prime meat campaign:

“Here's the thing with the new age Market, is that everyone uses the word spirituality and it doesn't fucking mean anything. It's just the same ambiguous idea that comes from all over the world, without actually committing to the specific definition of any particular worldview. So a whole generation of kids, the least religious in history, decide they hate God and people who tell them how to live and that sex is bad, but then guess what? Turns out they feel like pieces of shit and they want to save their souls as much as Mommy and Daddy did. But there's no new thing to fill them up. But this is where capitalism found a way: spirituality is a capitalist ideology. Where the thing being sold is a presumption to Purity, to be without guilt. Moral superiority. It's the same fucking thing as a Catholic Church, back when you could literally buy forgiveness from God.”

“So what's our angle?”

You love hearing yourself talk. "our angle is that the guilt around meat eating is a lie. We tell them it's natural, and there's nothing to feel ashamed or guilty about. Also, we play on spite. We play on the fact that people hate fuckign pretentious vegans. Hate, pity, and spite is our demographic. We’re the ones that accept people as they are, as animals in a food chain, as nature intended" Of course it was genius, but John wouldn't admit it, because he wished he came up with it.

“Yeah. I'll try to Workshop it.” Jon’s a petty selfish dick, but so are you, and you have no illusions otherwise. You feel powerful without shame. There have been many attempts these days to make you feel ashamed of yourself and what and who you are. You were a little bitch when you once almost believed that chick about what she said. Then you realize Not only was she a week, insecure bitch but she was full of shit. Since then, fucking these chicks became way easier.

You're outside this newest chicks place now, so you can sign off with John, throw the box of chicken bones in the street gutter, lick your fingers, and send her a text: knock knock. She buzzes you up, and you decide to ask for anal tonight.

She greets you at the door, and she's fucking hot. You wouldn't bother otherwise. Her skin is clear, her waist is skinny, her ass is fat, but she doesn't shave her armpits, normally a deal-breaker, but, maybe you can talk her into that. She got her curly hair wrapped in one of those hippie scarves, and one dreadlock with beads - she's also half Caribbean, which was part of the whole exotic appeal, of course you plan on fucking around the world a few times over, like a new British Empire of Riven stock, where the Sun never sets on your spunk.

She pulls you in, kisses you, and you worm your tongue into her mouth: the sauce, the fat, the other you breaking down and getting Lost in You. She pulls away for a second, a sour look on her face. “Did you just eat? tastes like barbecue.”

“ Yeah, tofu BBQ, from a new Korean spot near my office.”

“ I can taste the deep fry on your tongue, yuck.”

You put your hands on her ass. “At least it was tofu, though.”

“ Yeah, at least it was tofu.” She doesn't want to fight, she wants to fuck, that's good. You are playing it close with this little prank of yours. If she suspected you'd actually eating \*gasp\* Animal product, she kick you right the fuck out. From the first date, she made it entirely clear she wouldn't even date anyone who isn't vegan, and you played along. You ordered the fucking chickpea pasta with cashew based pesto, gagging inside. On the second date, she asked you to choke her. She put on a big, strong front about feminine energy, save the planet, saying she could read your energy, pick up your vibrations, all that shit. She asked if you believe in God, and you said you weren't sure, but you thought there had to be something greater than humans. You’re a copywriter, you know exactly what to tell her.

Tonight she was ready to clap cheeks immediately. You go for anal, seeing what she'll do if she doesn't say anything, freaky bitch.

You are a surge of nerve endings activated by the tight friction of a sphincter. You're the electricity traveling up to a brain back down to a pair of testes, an evacuation of spermatozoa, rushing down a urethra normally occupied by urine. You are the wad of 3 million sperm projecting into an anal cavity, backed up with feces told to go back where it came from by a stern dick. You're swimming for your Genesis with your endless other selves, with no mother to swim back to, and so you swim about in a plasma until you dissolve into the wall of the rectum, into those blue blood veins that carry you up to the heart, there's no receptor for your DNA strand though, but the other nutrients can find some purpose fueling your body.

You're drying up, or he's drying up, but there friction is turning to a burn.

“Wait, ow! stop.” He gets in a few more pumps, even though you're sure he's already climaxed, but you lost your Buzz, for the first time with him. He pulls out of you, and it feels like ripping off a Band-Aid too slowly. You're feeling a lot of things at once, and none of them are sexy feelings.

“What's wrong?” he asks, breathing over your neck, and you shrink away, reaching for your robe slung on the chair next to your bed. “I'm sorry, I thought you liked it.”

“I did, at first,” You tell him as you fold the silk kimono around you and fold up your body as much as possible. Your heart is beating a little extra hard, as you become aware of anxiety. “I wish you'd asked me first.”

“You're right, I'm sorry.” Still naked, half hard and dripping cum like a leaky faucet, big and muscular, proudly naked, crawling across the bed to you. “I got caught up, you're just so…

He's trying to eat you, nibbling on your neck, and you have to gently make him stop, because you have to remember, you don't know Jeremy as well as you want to, or think you do. You stand up to move away, arms folded, thinking about how you want him out, also ashamed because you asked him over.

“ I fucked up. I should have asked, I'm really sorry.” He's still holding his dick. “I could still finish you off, if you want, I don't mind.”

“No, I'm not in the mood anymore.” Your heart is still beating, and you try to be ready to run to the kitchen and grab a big knife, if he takes it that way. He sighs, rolls over and puts on his underwear.

“So, should I leave?” he's trying to sound like he feels remorse, but you think this might have been his plan all along.

“Do you want to leave?”

“No, no, I want to stay, I just want you to feel good and be comfortable.” You want to take him on his word, believe that he'd enjoy just hanging out, even if you didn't have sex again. But who knows, maybe you'd get in the mood again. You turn to him, smile, and offer him a kiss of gratitude.

“Want a beer?”

“Please.”

You pull two Stella's from the fridge and pop them open, offer one to him. You pull out a half-smoked joint, because you have to offer him something.

You ask him about his day, and he tells you his day was boring and he was just thinking about you all day. It immediately makes you insecure that he doesn't want to let you into his life. She's been around the block enough to know sweet-talk: he asked you because he has to, you go ahead and tell him about the new dog you helped rescue, and Pitbull named Patty. The sad eyes kill you every time you tell him that Patty was in a trap house where she was injected with fentanyl, and they gave her permanent brain damage.

“Why don't you adopt it?” he says it like he's challenging more than offering, but are you just being paranoid?

“I wish I could adopt every animal in the shelter. I just think my role is to take care of the ones that can't find homes until they do. Fostering them here wouldn't be much different than what I'm doing at work everyday.”

“I wondered why you didn't have any pets.”

“Why did you wonder?”

“‘Cuz of what you do, I just would have figured you had pets.”

You got defensive, and came off as bitch. He thinks you're crazy now--no, he's attacking you, somehow you feel it. He gets up and goes to your bathroom. You look through his phone and you feel terrible doing it, but there's something you need to know.

You see the text with John about analing this dumb vegan bitch, memes about how dumb vegans are, and you think about what to do, even as shame weighs on your chest such that you want to say nothing, just play nice until he leaves. No. This is a test of your spirit. You have to grab a knife, to be safe, and be the Justice you want for yourself. You make a mantra of manifesting Your Inner Strength, believe in yourself, even if you're terrified. He comes back from the bathroom and sees the kitchen knife in your hand.

“...What the fuck is going on?”

You hold his phone out in front of you, the evidence somehow also a shield that's supposed to physically defend you from him.

“Take your clothes and get the fuck out of here.”

Jeremy is standing there in front of you, like a hairier underwear model. You’ve always thought there was something going on behind his eyes that he was too shy to reveal, and you mistakenly took it to be intrigue and mystery when it really was just sociopathy. With his arms akimbo, calculating as he stares you down, nothing could be more terrifying. Suddenly, he thumbs his nose and snickers. “Yeah, sure.” He reaches over to his pants, sits back down on your bed and puts on his clothes like he has all the time in the world.

“You’re a fucking monster. How do you live with yourself? How do you sleep at night being so cruel and heartless?”

“You’ve seen me sleep before. You slept right next to me.” You throw his phone at the back of his head, a direct hit, and he springs up, fury flooding through him and you put your extra hand on the knife. He relaxes and smiles again as he slips on his socks and puts on his shirt. You can’t let him win, there’s got to be justice.

“I’m never going to let you do this again,” Part of you knows you should wait until he leaves, but you just need to break him down and see him crack. “I’ll make sure you never get to do this to another woman.”

“You’re gonna cancel me? Call the cops on me?” He’s putting on his tie again and lacing up his shoes. “Do it. I dare you to try. I can afford better lawyers than you and I don’t live on people’s opinions of me. The people I work for don’t give a shit who I am. You can’t take anything away from me.” He’s getting worked up, ready to unload. “You know, you call me a monster, but what the hell are you? Some fucking innocent little pure flower child? You’re full of shit. You and all the cunts like you, male, female, shemale, whatever. You try so hard to be good people, be better, or whatever, but I think it makes you all worse. You’re in denial about what you are. You think you can go through life without stepping on toes? Living *is* stepping on toes. And you go around with your righteous crusades convincing yourself you’re making the world a better place, all the time doing the exact same shit you condemn the rest of humanity for. If I'm a monster, fine, at least I know what I am. You, you’re a monster as much as me, but you’re worse because you refuse to see it in yourself.”

He’s getting ready to walk out the door, and before he can turn his back to put a period on his sentence, you push the knife into his back, push him up against the door, stabbing as fast as you can before he can open the door.

You call the cops and tell the truth: Jeremy Riven raped you and told you he’d get away with it, and you stabbed him. You’d thought in the immediate aftermath about staging the situation a little better, cutting yourself, making it look like a fight, but no--you wouldn’t go down that road. Facing the truth and its consequences was the right thing to do. There’s always a right thing to do.

You assumed it was implicitly right and conveniently easy to judge yourself in the worst possible ways, that way no one else could judge you any more harshly and that mainly came out to be true. Your immediate surrounding circle saw you as a victim acting in self-defense, and the jury found it that way as well. You knew it’d be nothing but trouble to look on the internet and see what people said, and there was a pretty even split of those who thought you were powerful, in the right, doing what so many victims of rape had wish they could’ve done. There were plenty of men who called you a crazy psychopath, and the reason men hated women. You tried to hold onto seeing yourself as a victim and as a monstrous criminal all at once.

Though you won your case and your innocence, neither you nor Jeremy had really “won.” You couldn’t stop dreaming about him. He was always a monster, taunting you, his ugliness and monstrosity now this kind of mirror. He’d made you into a monster. In the trial, you watched his parents, who looked like perfectly nice mid-western white people as they wept over the results of the trial. His mother spat and cursed at you walking out of the court house, and his father looked as if he was still focused on accepting what his son had done to find his way to his fate.

You decided to do a residency at the Omega Institute and Ashram, to get some spiritual clarity. You were surrounded by white people with soft smiles who were always gently laying soft hands on you and promising that with their help, you’d unlock your bliss through your pain and trauma.

In session after session of group inner child work, keening and bellowing and releasing and weeping and then chanting and dancing, one of these very nice white people would see you still off on your own, looking across the property and say something like: “you’re not guilty, you don’t have to feel guilty, you did the right thing.” And you knew they were projecting the same thing you’d always held onto: the desire to be pure. This desire to transcend. This looking at all things ugly and undesirable, and believing these were things to be cured through a spiritual practice.

One of these nice white people was about their bullshit again, with the soft ashram attempt at comfort, and the hate boiled up inside of you and you tackled her to the ground and punched and screamed-- and even then, the head of the program insisted that you *wanted* to be condemned-- no shit-- and acting out this desire showed that you needed the ashram and they would continue to accept you through your shadow work and processing of guilt. You left, since they wouldn’t make you leave.

In all the three weeks you were there, you had only 4 bowel movements, all of which were painful, difficult, and all the prunes and laxatives in the world couldn’t help you. Juice cleanses, rice cleanses, and several other attempts at purging worked in the immediate, but as you became once more a blank slate, each time feeling horribly drained, malnourished, and generally unhealthy, and your mother insisted that you eat, and friends recommend diets, so far, nothing has stopped you from once again becoming painfully constipated, and horrible cleanses and enemas are the only thing so far that has worked. Your body has become your jail sentence.

Dr. Chodron was recommended by a close friend. Dr. Chodron is a 60 year old white lady, a devout Tibetan Mahayana Buddhist who studied alongside the more famous Pema Chodron. Dr. Chodron works mainly with the incarcerated. It is for this very reason she was recommended.

Her apartment is in the East Village, one she’s had since the 70’s so she claims, rent controlled which is the only reason she can afford it. It is cozy. It reminds you of the vast difference between Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism, where the former is grand and large, massive, beautiful buildings that fill you with a sense of sublime scope to the infinite forms of existence. The tibetan monasteries, to the contrary, are small, intimate, and filled with colors, and Dr. Chodron’s apartment feels much the same. There are layers of dirt, old brown stains on old carpet, a faint odor of cat urine, clutters of paper on a desk, potted plants in varying conditions of green and brown, so many tiny details packed into a tiny apartment. But she looks happy as a pig in shit when she opens the door to let you in, scurrying to grab a teapot and pour some for you, without asking if you wanted any.

She gives you a look over and says with a crass, pip squeaky and creaky old -lady voice, “You look like shit!”

You’re caught off guard, offended, but do your best to laugh and admit that’s why you’re here after all, a good thing you came, she assures you.

She’s acquainted with your story, but tells you to tell it all again as you sit in her living room with two arm chairs. You run through your self-narrative as you’ve constructed it, pretty transparently, as transparent as you have possibly been with yourself, so if you’re lying, you don’t even know it, and hopefully this lady is good enough to pick up on that and tell you what’s what.

You’ve already surrendered, you tell her. By the end of the story, she’s still just listening, as if she knows you’ve still got things to say, and though you feel exhausted, feeling compelled to still say something, you wring yourself out for those last desperate words that finally account for you now, in this woman’s living room, in the present of your life.

“I want to give up. And I don’t mean like suicide, but ego death. I’ve been trying so hard for so long, my entire life, really. I had some fucked up shit happen to me as a kid, and because of it, I’ve spent my entire life looking for a safe space, in the form of spirituality, whatever the hell that is. But I felt like I found it and I had it for a while. It was a path, a way toward liberation and freedom, and, I felt like I knew it. I knew I was divine, and I’ve felt it. I know I and all things are one, and we’re all connected, but only sometimes I've felt it, and I’ve thought I had to work for it, work to get better.

“And, feeling bad about myself, it didn’t start with *him.* It’d always been there, but I’d gotten really good at dealing with it. I just don’t see a way back.”

“A way back to what?”

“To feeling good about myself, about loving myself, feeling sacred and whole and divine.”

“Well, as a Buddhist, we’d say the problem is first off, you’re still attached to feeling good about yourself.”

“Are you saying people should just let their life go? I thought the whole point of Buddhism is to learn to control yourself.”

“What you have is a problem accepting the whole thing as it is. That’s reality. Western People come to all the eastern traditions looking for an *escape* from reality, whether they realize it or not. Christianity taught them life was impure and fallen from God, and they’ve all been walking around with that assumption. Then, they come to hear some buddhist monks speak about Nirvana, and the monks tell them, *this is it, you’re living it.* And the westerners say, *you’ve got to be joking!* And we say, *nope.* So then they think, *well, the world is garbage, but I’ll find that safe place in myself, away from the world*, and they’re still looking for an escape. Spirituality isn’t supposed to deliver you into some state of phenomena and perception, some dream of heaven that is opposed to this life and this moment as you’re living it. The spiritual practice is destructive, it’s burning away those illusions, to get you in touch with reality. Yes, the reality is shit. Yes, you’re a part of that shit. All that shit you hate and disgusts you, that’s all *you*. Any kind of legitimate spiritual practice is just getting you to live with that truth.”

You realize digesting the truth is a process. “So, you’re just saying I live with it?”

“I could lie to you and tell you what you want to hear, but I know you don’t want that.” Dr. Chodron smiles at you with compassion. You know she feels your pain, that she feels it as her own pain, and you feel a softness that you weren’t able to receive before.

You excuse yourself to use the restroom, almost jubilantly, because you can feel that potato-shaped stone in your lower intestine worm its way into your rectrum. You are some kind of unconscious mental block that has released a tension holding your intestines in a knot, now released. You are the impacted feces finally being passed out a sphincter that three months ago was filled with the semen of a monster. The invasion of another you. You were once one thing, but you became something else. You are feces sluicing down oxidated copper pipes, to join rivers of urine, blood, pharmaceuticals, household chemicals, commingling and dancing until their arrival to a treatment plant for some more chemicals meant to dissolve and take you apart. You are the ocean that receives your own waste, waste that congeals and refuses to turn into new life, matter that remains dead and unable to become food. You are an Ego, which must be an ego. You are the idea of a person, created with love, but one that will dissolve, whether you like it or not. You are the medicine which is a poison, the only difference being the dose. You are everything, and I mean everything. There is no difference anywhere.