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In Relation to Speciesism

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William & Mary

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IN RELATION TO

~~GEN^NDER~~

~~DEATH~~

~~FACTORY~~ ~~FA~~ ~~RMONG~~

~~CHILDREN~~

~~FURRIES~~

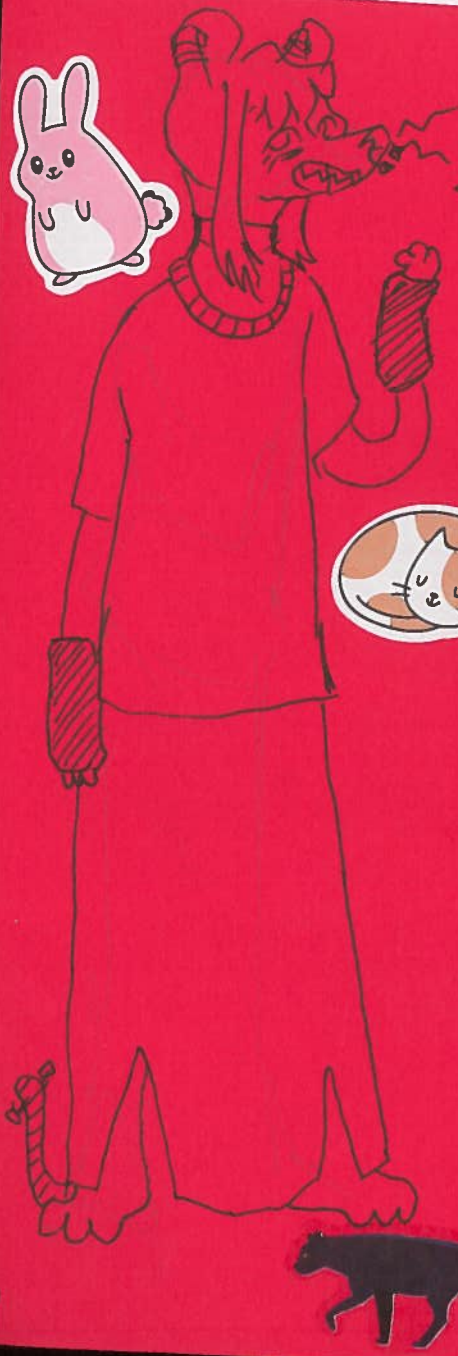
~~BEASTS~~

~~MEMORIES~~

~~JUSTICE~~

SPECIESISM

Speciesism: "1. Prejudice or discrimination based on species; especially discrimination against animals. 2. the assumption of human superiority on which speciesism is based" -Merriam-Webster



Hello, I'm Jordan, though I usually go by Juniper when I draw myself like this. I don't always find the human form as aesthetically appealing or dynamic as animal forms, so I often prefer to draw myself, and sometimes other people in my life, like this. Although, that implies human and animal are distinctly different, and I don't really believe that. In fact, I don't really understand why some find the distinction so important.



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This is a younger version of myself. I didn't always draw myself like this, but I've always felt connected to an animal side of myself. This zine is a reflection on my relationship with animals, speciesism, and self over the course of my life.



IN RELATION TO PETS



In a lot of ways children's lives are intertwined with those of animals. Both are smaller than people, have fewer rights, and can't communicate up to our standards. Both have a lot to say and think, but it takes effort from people to understand and hear them. Why elevate their voices? It's not like anyone will get what they are saying, so let's just advocate for them. We don't need to hear their side first, they can't know what they want.

So it makes sense then, child/animal bonds. There's a level of understanding there, an understanding of misunderstanding. Both crawling and menning at the feet of a higher power, the adult. The child can play animal and the animal can play friend. Shared games, shared bed. The animal is a mentor for the child, a mirror, an equal, a character on screen to project oneself onto. The child and the pet's love for one another is unconditional, because that's what the adult said it should be.

But relationships have bumps in the road, so what happens when someone missteps? The adult will always side with the child.

Because the pet is good for the child, not the other way around. A pet's a built in friend, a socializer, a lesson on responsibility, and a low-stakes introduction to death. But the child, well they can make mistakes, they are just learning.



What if your cat doesn't want your kid up all in their face? If your dog bites? Your lizard finds your kid annoying? The gerbil's a bit afraid? Is your fish not entertaining enough? Well, then your pet's a bad animal. Who cares what the kid was doing.



And when your child forgets to feed the bird or didn't know the fish had to stay in the water? Well, what a silly story to tell your friends. We'll just buy you a replacement pet, because how could you have known any better?

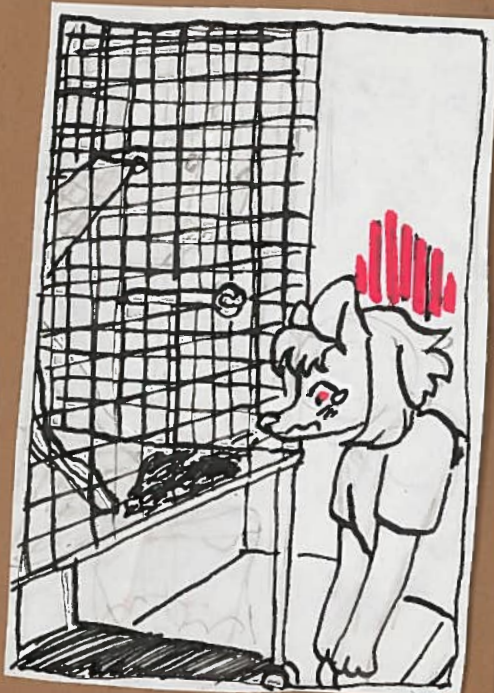
It was just an animal's life. I mean sure, a life, but a meaningless one, a replaceable one, a forgettable one. So you accidentally killed the hamster again? Well, everyone knows an outrageous hamster death story, that's just growing up. It's normal, natural.

The hamster, bird, fish. They're just a lesson, a tool, a toy. And now your child knows that the fish needs to stay in water, the bird needs food to live, and the hamster dies and goes to heaven if you put it in the microwave.

Maybe when granny dies it won't be so shocking if you know they're waiting for her up there.

And I'm sure the deaths on your hands won't linger with you forever, Right?







Have you named your gerbils yet?

They died...

WHAT!? How??

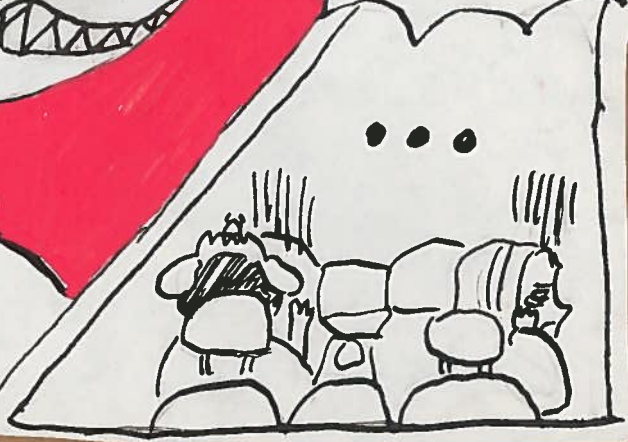
I forgot to feed and water them before I went to daddy's house and they were dead when I got back...

Why didn't mommy-



I DON'T WANNA TALK ABOUT IT

WELL YOU SHOULD HAVE FUCKIN G FEED THEM GRAHAM!!



← Flip over for more poetry!

"If I am killed for simply living"

And God,
please let the deer
on the highway
get some kind of heaven.
Something with tall soft grass
and sweet reunion.

Let the moths in porch lights
go some place
with a thousand suns,
that taste like sugar
and get swallowed whole.
May the mice
in oil and glue
have forever dry, warm
and full bellies.

If I am killed
for simply living.
let death be kinder
than man.

~Althea Davis (@writerandweeper)

Now we draw a line at animal cruelty someplace. If a pet dies, it's worth mourning. If your favorite animal nears extinction, that should make headlines. If a child kicks a dog, cuts open rabbits, and hangs cats by their tails they must be psychopathic, a serial killer in the making.

Intervention won't take place, however, until a human life is at stake. A pet is replaceable. An extinction is a tragedy, sure, but does it really change anything? And a boy who kills dogs is a man who kills men, and that's what we really fear. So why do pests warrant intervention, warrant our energy to slap away? Why do they deserve death?

Well, one could argue they threaten human existence. We need crops, livestock, food. We need to eat, and they threaten that. Or they carry disease, equally as formidable. But not every creature caught underfoot kills, sickens, or decays our way of life. Some merely made the mistake of catching our attention, being small enough to crush and visible enough to annoy. Some are merely a nuisance because I said so. And which one of us has the power here?

Pest: 1. a destructive insect or other animal that attacks crops, food, livestock, etc.

2. (informal) an annoying person or thing; a nuisance.

3. (archaic) bubonic plague.

Pest, the worst of the worst. An animal below other animals. Destructive, annoying, plague-like. And what does one do with a pest? Eliminate it.

If adults must eliminate pests, then why protect them from the unwavering curiosity of children, from their cruelty of innocence? one day they will grow up to learn why pests deserve death. Today, let them be a toy. The one and only time pests could be of any use.

In Relation

PESTS



"ten legs, eight broken"

To the spider,
the shadowed creature in the corner of the room,
I hate you.

You scared me just as your brothers and sisters did before you,
and I will tell you what I told them.

You are a trespasser that does not belong here.
You entered without knocking.

Roamed freely like this is your home and decorated my walls with
unwanted, silk webs without asking.

You may not be the only killer here, but only one of us is innocent,
and it's not you.

The spider says to me, it's brittle body squashed and dying,
It's not you, either.

There is venom infused in my fang-shaped maws,
but I was born this way.

What's your excuse?

If you could count your murders, how long would you be counting?

Am I really this threatening?

I thought human hearts were bigger than mine, but you have killed with
malice instead of marrow of your bones and poison bubbling behind your
scowl.

And I'm sorry for scaring you,
but I didn't know being seen would cost me my life.

Maybe

if you didn't fabricate the prickly feeling of my legs crawling up
your skin while I crawled across the living room floor;
if the webs I weaved were made of cotton candy and captured
clementines, cherries, and sweet peas rather than struggling wings and
blood;

if I had a pink tongue, plush fur, a wagging tail, and four legs
instead of eight;

if I had only two eyes, and they were glittering stars and not
supermassive black holes;

if I was the same but looked different;
maybe you wouldn't hate me.

Maybe you wouldn't have loved me, either,
and maybe you still wouldn't have let me stay,
but maybe you would have shown me the door

or a window,

Maybe you would have shown me mercy.

(But you are still standing,
and I am still sorry).

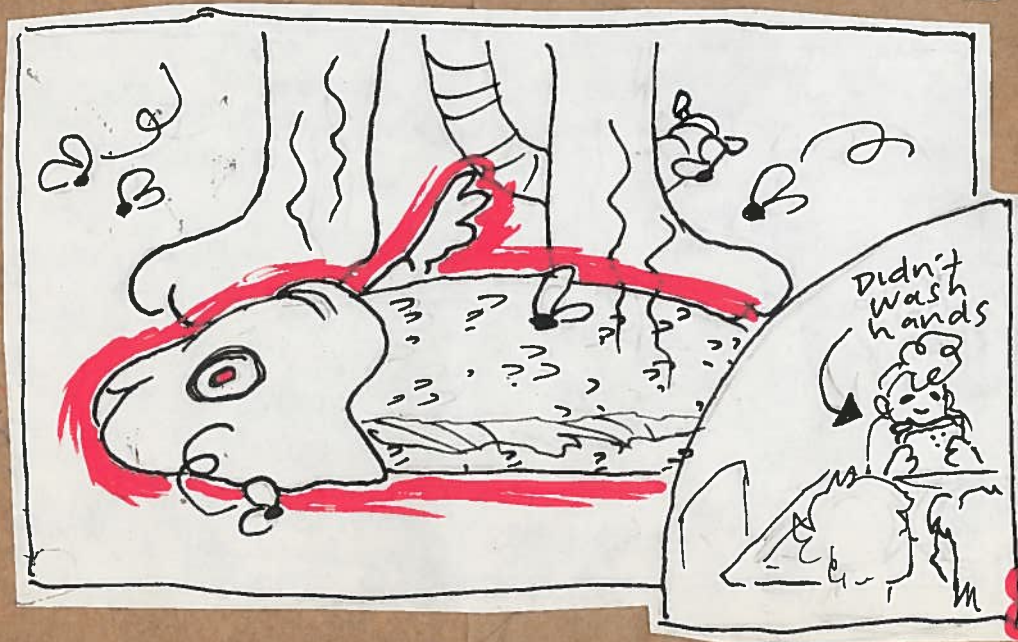
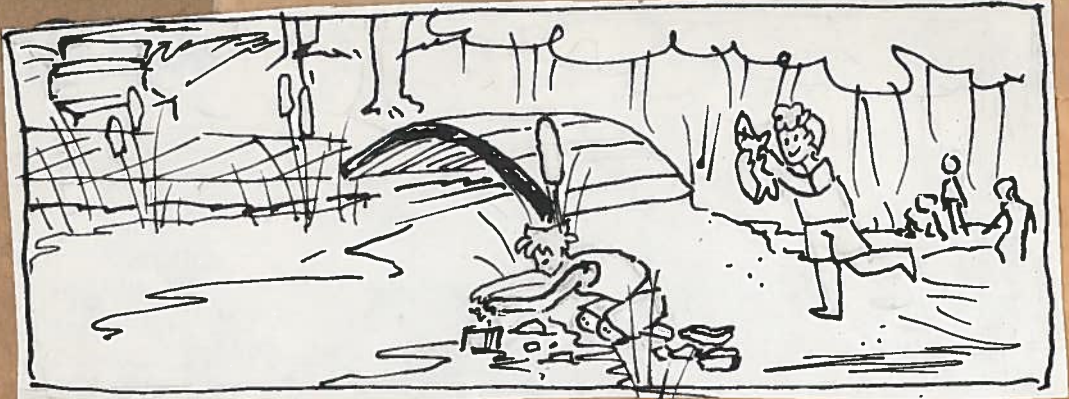
I think,

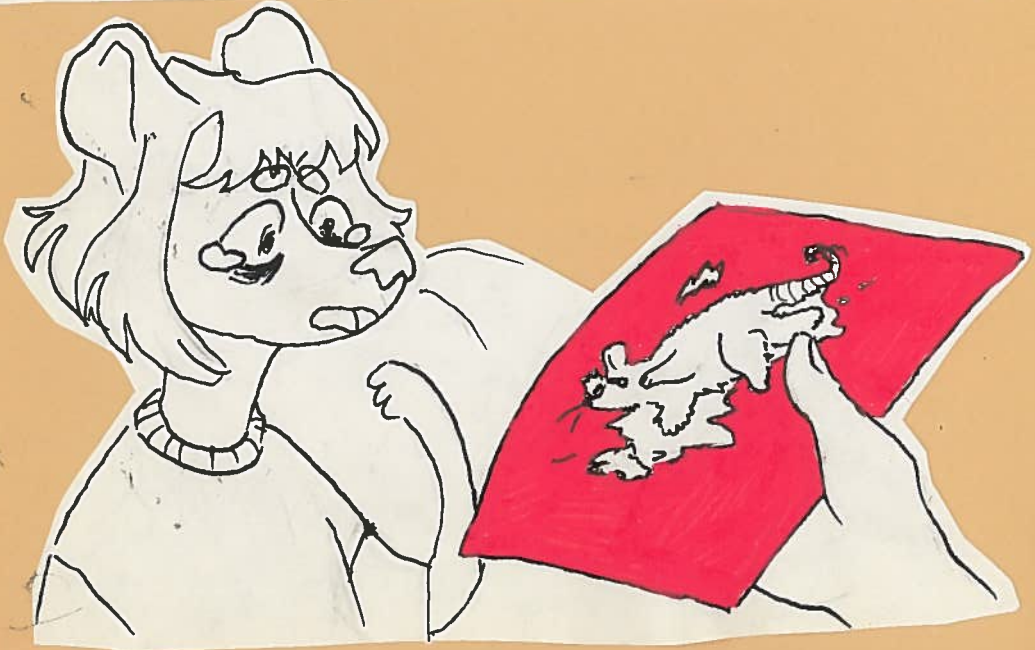
maybe,

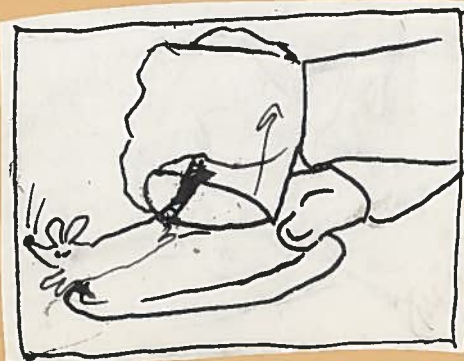
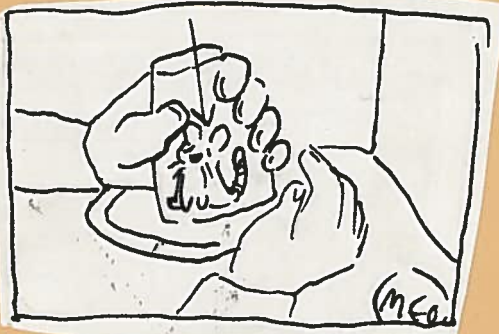
no matter how reluctant,
mercy would've been enough.

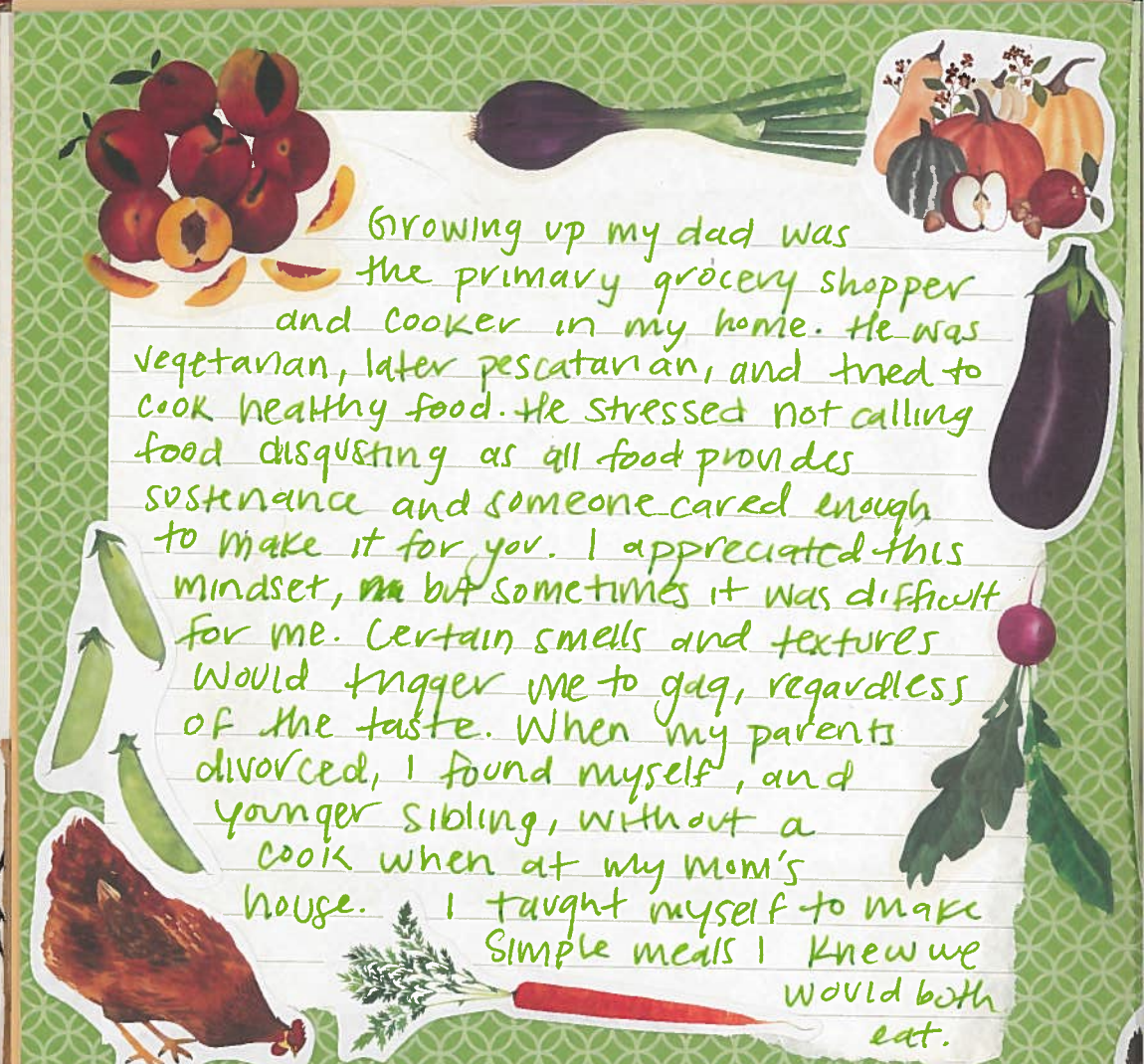










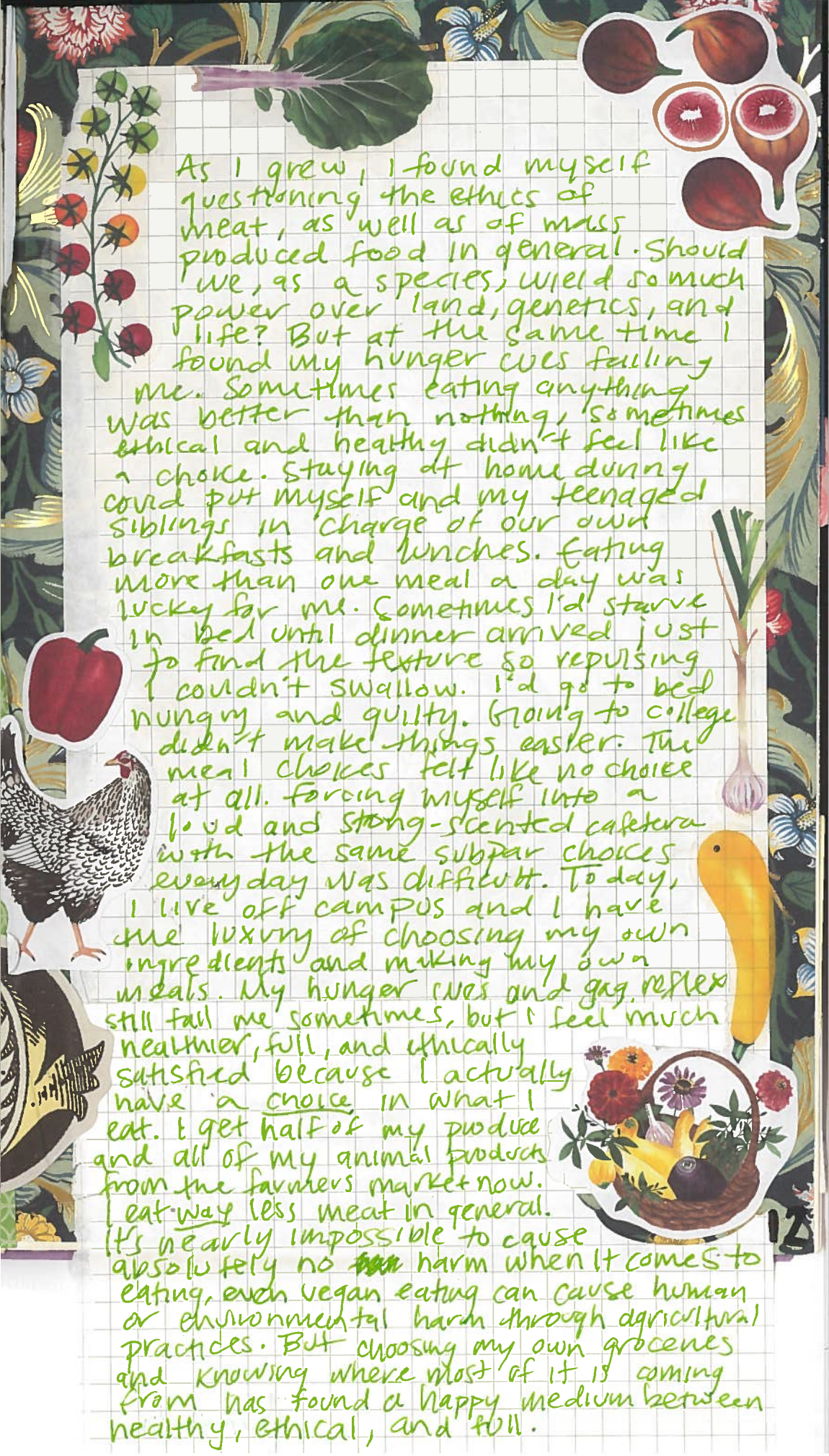


Growing up my dad was the primary grocery shopper and cooker in my home. He was vegetarian, later pescatarian, and tried to cook healthy food. He stressed not calling food disgusting as all food provides sustenance and someone cared enough to make it for you. I appreciated this mindset, ~~me~~ but sometimes it was difficult for me. Certain smells and textures would trigger me to gag, regardless of the taste. When my parents divorced, I found myself, and younger sibling, without a cook when at my mom's house.

I taught myself to make simple meals I knew we would both eat.

In Relation To

FOOD



As I grew, I found myself questioning the ethics of meat, as well as of mass produced food in general. Should we, as a species, wield so much power over land, genetics, and life? But at the same time I found my hunger cues failing me. Sometimes eating anything was better than nothing, sometimes ethical and healthy didn't feel like a choice. Staying at home during covid put myself and my teenaged siblings in charge of our own breakfasts and lunches. Eating more than one meal a day was lucky for me. Sometimes I'd starve in bed until dinner arrived just to find the texture so repulsive I couldn't swallow. I'd go to bed hungry and guilty. Going to college didn't make things easier. The meal choices felt like no choice at all. Forcing myself into a loud and strong-scented cafeteria with the same subpar choices every day was difficult. To day, I live off campus and I have the luxury of choosing my own ingredients and making my own meals. My hunger cues and gag reflex still fail me sometimes, but I feel much healthier, full, and ethically satisfied because I actually have a choice in what I eat. I get half of my produce and all of my animal products from the farmers market now. I eat way less meat in general. It's nearly impossible to cause absolutely no ~~any~~ harm when it comes to eating, even vegan eating can cause human or environmental harm through agricultural practices. But choosing my own groceries and knowing where most of it is coming from has found a happy medium between healthy, ethical, and full.

158,780 monkeys were tested on in labs in 2015.

Speciesism assumes nonhumans to be inferior to humans.
Sexism assumes nonmen to be inferior to men.
Human assumes humans to be men, so what does that mean a woman is? An animal.
And what do women and animals have in common? Well, quite a lot.

As human and nonman, we have no intrinsic value. Rather our worth is tied to our function within a (human's) world, an exploiter's world. In his world, females are of use only as sexual objects:

to oggle
to fuck
to reproduce

Once that is spent, we are worth very little. Assigned to the realm of domesticity, is it such a wonder woman and animal are one in the same? Woman is epithetted most often with domesticated animals: pig, cow, dog. We are mindless and subservient. Let the pig make your sandwich and when the woman no longer lactates, kill the bitch.

What about those of us who threaten his perfect world of domesticity? The vixen is a sexual object worth pursuit, an alluring sport in protection of a motherly hen. Has man ever been above fucking his prey? ...the hen doesn't need to know...

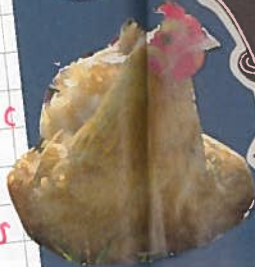
900,000 cows are slaughtered a day.

670,000 dogs are euthanized every year.

61,400 live snakes and 756,441 snakeskins were exported from Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam in 2009.

47,000 women and girls were killed by their intimate partners or family in 2020.

in RELATION To WORDS



3.8 million pigs are slaughtered a day.

120 million mice and rats are used in biomedical research every year.

6 billion male chicks are culled every year.

15 million foxes are killed for fur every year.

Not all bestial epithets are sexist, but they are all speciesist. People of color are oppressed when the monkey is invoked, men are insulted when the lackass is cited, but who experiences prejudice when we compare the sheep or the vulture? Well, the sheep and vulture do.

Language has power. It has power to oppress and it has power to equalize.

Do you really feel so superior?
Are women not a part of humankind?
Are humans not a part of animal-kind?

You're an animal.

Speak like it.



MONKEY
BITCH



chick
FOX



COW
pig



SHAKE
FAT



In Ostriker's 1986 essay 'Divided Selves: The Quest for Identity', Ostriker wrote that creative women are defined in one of two ways in a masculine culture: nothing or monster.

Women's poetry dreads nonexistence, yet many women write themselves as nobody.

However, some women rebel against social expectations of silence; they proclaim themselves monsters and freaks.

My womanhood is freakish and non-existent. I claim the feminine, masculine, and bestial. My monstrous silence surpasses human.

Our society is ruled by false dichotomies. Black or white. Gray or straight. Monogamous or cheating. Man or woman. Human or animal.

It's always or. Nothing or monster. Why must I be confined? What becomes of me if I'm both, neither, in-between.

Some things have names, a word for the in-between, an identifying label. And they are helpful sometimes. And they just create a new box sometimes. I claim these identities, genderqueer, bisexual, demisexual, polyamorous, furry.

But other times I do wish to be in-between, both, and neither without question.

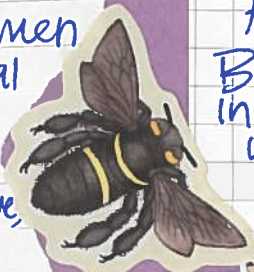
Why can't we just be?


Some-where around middle school I began drawing myself as an animal, a dragon to be exact. I didn't even know what a furry or (fur)sona was, but I had one. It just seemed right to me, closer to what I really was. My first exploration into queerness, exploration beyond what and who I was supposed to be. The first time I stretched my expression of self.

In high school I'd start calling myself a furry and establish a fursona (or wingsona). It'd be a while longer before I questioned by sexuality, gender, or relationship orientation. Eventually I realized my dragon-sona wasn't a very true representation of self,

and so the opposum-sona came to be. Both co-exist, both ~~have~~ bear the same name, both are me, just different aspects, elements, and times.

IN RELATION TO SELF





Raised by paws and tails and alcoholism
I'm surprised I don't walk on all fours.
My altruism was born from blood-sucking
vampire bats

My grandma and a need to be ok.

My empathy is akin to a hound;


It's my weapon and my defeat.

I eat meat I didn't kill

And my consumption devours me whole
like a detritivore too overcome by
philosophy,

Pondering can being be ethical?

In a world filled with false dichotomies,
I find myself with decision paralysis.



My gender is bared teeth and
sharpened claws,

Fighting for my ability to choose.

I'm all survival instincts and love,
overflowing unending and gullible.

Because I'm human and I'm animal,


Divine and monstrous

Mythical, invisible,

Rendered to nothing.

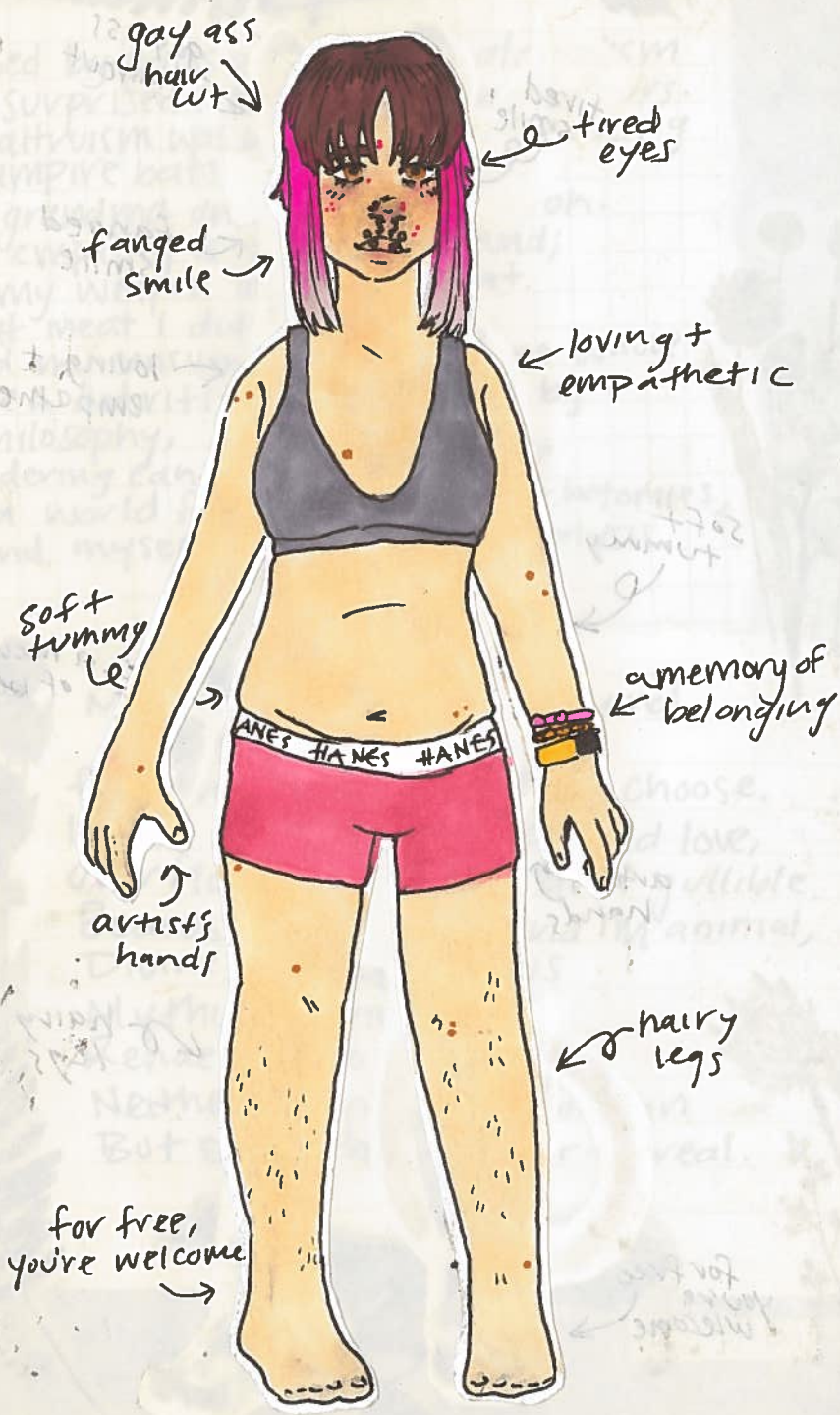
Neither man nor woman

But something closer to real.





A Person.



gay ass hair cut

tired eyes

fanged smile

loving + empathetic

soft + tummy

a memory of belonging

artists hands

hairy legs

for free, you're welcome

An Animal.