

Metabolize, If Able

For my fellow sickos

I guess we were trying to infect the present, like have you heard of those bio hacker collectives making homemade vaccines in their kitchens from collected specimens of super viruses from each other's fluids all mixed together? Anyway, I guess what I'm trying to say is that most days hold an endless repetition of unspoken terror, that life, in it's daily, violently structured monotony, will never alter its frame. However, by making this film we stepped out of our given lives and refused to turn back. Wove our collective inherited toxicity to make a representation of our rage.

*The final scene has been called activism in some reviews, but we prefer to call it haptic-cinema made with the semiotics of revenge. Bio*Corp has simply called it terrorism.*

Sometimes crisis is framed as an abrupt moment of reckoning, but for us it clear it is always a chronic condition...

Excerpt of statement from Ruby Penny speaking of her film *Turn Illness Into Weapon*.

I was cast from a mold made from the body of a girl they found dead in a dumpster behind Bio*Corp.

DR LAD wouldn't show me genetic code, the body or even tell me her name. He said her name was found through face recognition software; traced her to an image online. The company never reported her death. If I knew her name I would be a liability to the company, so like all other clones, I just call her *prototype*.

He told me everything about my genetics is the same to her except the manipulated fingerprints and eyeballs which he designed himself.

Bodies, the dead ones especially, are a trade made between corporations to archive human DNA and thereby to create clones. This is not widely known information, especially to biohumans who distrust clones and actively avoid learning the histories behind our formation.

I am a clone and do not know specifically why they presently make and maintain clones, though I've gathered theories. It used to be the pharma companies investing in clone research. They planned to use our bodies as testing grounds for new medications and vaccines and even as incubators for organ transplants. This was not needed with the advent of specific biotechnology that effectively tested medication using DNA and genetic information from biohumans, because it could be done in a lab without testing subjects. We were made further redundant when factory farming techniques were developed for organs. Our bodies suddenly had no productive function. However, the corporate economies and physical structures of the cloning industry already had been instituted; it seems for the last few years they have experimented to find a new use value for their product.

The Corp augments our genetic code for auto-immunity, making us dependent on their medical care. We appear as what they image as healthy and able mind/body human specimens, but left to our own devices our bodies have a swift break down rate. Our maintenance program was developed as a replacement process. This means as we get ill to the point of life collapse entire bodily systems are replaced, rather than mended or healed. Between replacements we are all compulsorily medicated to keep our system functioning and the pharma companies placated. Thus, cloning grew into one of the most viable and profitable industries for many economic sectors, vying to buy into our assumed product longevity.

As long as I am faithful to DR LAD (my assigned DR) and my Compulsory Wellness*Plan, I will always have guaranteed treatment. Biohumans are not so lucky. Because of the rapidly changing climate, toxic contexts and individualist attitudes they are affected by rising cases of chronic illness, mutated viruses and environmental-based infections regularly, and only the very wealthy can afford care. Thus, most of them are in debt for a majority of their life or ill until death. Their body is collateral, and it is rumored that those who do not make payments end up in the dumpster.

One rumor on the clone and spawn forums is that Bio*Corp gets subsidies from the state for every clone formed because they are essentially a population control device. We are not fertile. If we did not spawn our population would be self contained. It is also said that the amount of clones are all formed into subjects between the ages of 22-30, past this point older or younger ages are not represented. We do not age.

Economically, we are vital and can work as long as we regulate our health. We are strongly suggested careers by our DR's upon formation, and they help us to establish ourselves professionally through their connections. However, my concentration stats are so poor that DR LAD has given up trying to ease me into corporate environments. I work jobs that only last a few weeks or months--a short enough amount of time before my employer realizes I am not very good at whatever I am doing, or that I'm too sick to come in often. This kind of living gets labeled as "unproductive," but many of us have devised alternative practices of surviving.

Yesterday I went to one of your movies bootlegged at the Dolly Theater.

The place is close to my apartment, built into an old convenience store. Two clones, Dex and Randy, moved in some years ago. Bought the boarded up store and then ripped its guts out to install six rows of seats, a screen, a little booth for the projector and a bathroom, all build out of found materials and scrap plywood; posters and notices layer and peel off the walls. The two sleep in the back behind the screen. Sometimes while the films are playing you can hear them bickering or fucking.

They sell moving images from before and also the current reels. The biggest crowds come for screenings of porn. The non-hetero clones and biohuman freaks, probably some spawns too. It's one of the few places in the city that clones and bios socialize, and there is not really anywhere else in the city that shows pre-Corp content. Technically, it's illegal as are the new reels bootlegged from the net a few days after the release in the Cine*Plex's. Since the Outers is far from the center and Corp jurisdiction, they're not too concerned, at least about copyright infringement happening at a little, clone-run theater. Local Corp security never do much of anything as far as public screening copy laws go anyway. They're more concerned about patrolling the net and feeds. However, it has become a locus of clone counterculture, so we're just waiting for the day it gets raided. We regularly de-bug the place, alert for undercover Corp people hanging around.

Dex likes to paint and recently he did the ceiling of the Dolly. He painted a group of animals from below. Some extinct, some still existent. I like to lie on the carpeted floor and look at their underbellies, paws and genitals; rabbits, cats, sheep, wolf, monkey, cow, mice, pigs. . . some of them look down towards the viewer and some off into the parallel plane they're depicted within.

The image is based off of a famous photograph of a group of cloned mammals from many years ago. In the photo they are shot face forward in a lab. In Dex's version, the sky is above them, light blue and clear, and between the animals are bugs, spiders, blades of grass, butterflies.

The same group of people usually show up to the theater. Tammy always goes with me, but she was inpatient getting her check up at Corp. We had pushed back the chairs and were all lying on the soft, stained carpet. Everyone cheered when you appeared; it was quite a way to see the film. In mixed company my friends don't act like they know about you, but it was just us. It was nice there, everyone drinking and watching you on screen. Not scared that people will recognize and call out our likeness. Of course it's always strange to see your name written out *Starring: Ruby Penny...*

I'm not surprised that the plot-line was upsetting, you did warn me.

CopyCat is a game Tammy and I usually play. Tammy always goes first:

My prototype was a poet. I have all these words that float through my head and I have no idea how they got there, I don't even know what most of them are! Things like: cherry blossom, synchronicity, moss, somatics, song bird, echinacea...

My prototype appeared more feminine than me, but had an aura of resilience that was intimidating to everyone that met her. She lifted weights and learned how to defend herself.

My prototype was a wild dancer at parties and a notorious heartbreaker. She brought people together! Let people hide out at her place, fed them and let them rest.

My prototype was in the middle of all the action. Remember that med heist that happened right before we were formed? That group liberated and redistributed meds from a warehouse outside the city. I think she was in that group, I just know it. That's probably why she got compromised and traded.

Don't flatter yourself! You don't come from those medi-Robin-Hoods. We're all out here trying to exist, remember? Your prototype was probably an unlucky biohuman who didn't pay her med bill to Corp.

Like most days, Tammy wakes up before me. Goes to the roof of our apartment building to tend to her plants and then comes back downstairs to wake me. We have our breakfast together in our sparse kitchen, at the old wooden table in comfortable silence; me drinking instant coffee and her tea, eating toast and powdered eggs. Recently she started writing poems since she got the idea that her prototype was a poet. I read the news off the forums. She never shows me those poems but says they are all about our *daily wonderful terrifying life*.

I've been living with her for a while now, though I only knew her for a short amount of time before I moved in. It's a small place—we share the same room and inside of our intimate domesticity we love one another—but our relationship is not particularly sexual. We have had sex in the past, only when we were both drunk. Tammy mostly has a thing for younger clones anyway, *the fresh ones*, she calls them. I think it's because they're not quite as jaded post-formation. When we first met, Tammy was really into me for a few months, I was flattered, but overwhelmed.

I was drawn to her intensity. Often for clones, “life” feels like an obsolete term, but Tammy is determined to live hers as hard as possible. She is obsessed with plants, specifically herbs, and using them to self-medicate and heal. She started because she found an old book about it, then began wandering around the edges of the Outers identifying and gathering seeds and starts between all the concrete. At this point she has even started to grow things for others specific needs. One of the oldest clones I know, Diandra—she's at least nine years post-formation—suffered from terrible insomnia for a long time. Tammy began making her these teas and advising her on exercises to reduce anxiety, and now Diandra is sleeping more. A lot of clones now ask her questions about suggestions for issues they're having.

Tammy's DR came on a house visit once because she had heard rumors of an unapproved healing transmitter in the Outers and knew about Tammy's gardening. She lied, said she was using them for cooking, threw some herbs into the sauce heating up in the pan on our dingy stove, saying *Look see here, this is all I am doing. Can you please leave now? I'm not your pet poodle you can watch while it shits, we deserve some privacy*. She got in trouble for that, but for weeks after we were calling each other ‘poodle’ fondly.

We met at a normalization training a few years ago, where we connected quickly. For compliant clones it's only required once a year, but for clones with low socialization stats it's required every few months or “as needed.” Tammy has terrible stats. At one point, for a period, she would spit on her DR anytime she tried to come near Tammy or examine her. Through electrotherapy they broke her down. I wouldn't call her compliant now at all, she's one of the most anti-Corp clones I know, but she does pretend to play by their rules, at least to survive. When she comes home from her DR appointments at Corp she throws our stuff around the apartment and breaks dishes yelling, *fuck those fuckers white coat, shit heads...*until she collapses on the floor crying, breathing heavily and eventually falling asleep. I quietly go around after picking up all the mess left in her wake. Push her meditation book across the floor with my foot to wherever she has collapsed, so she can read it when she wakes up.

Simple and Daily Guided Meditations for Failing Bodies in Precarious States

By: Clone #85720

meditation #1

The word *stasis* has two definitions, the first being *a period or state of inactivity or equilibrium*. And the second as, *civil strife*. In medicine, it is used to describe *a stoppage of body fluids*. In ancient Greece, it was used to report civil war, as in *the conflict named stasis was creating a stoppage within a region or organization as a means to alter or abolish the ruling system or class*.

How are your body's states of stillness and upheaval vital to one another? Think of trees; root systems; *rootedness*. "Rad" in latin means root; roots can be radical, destructive, medicinal, grounding us into place and earth. When are you unmoving yet catalyzing change?

I am sitting at Corp*Plex waiting for an appointment. I log into the Clone*Wellness System through my tablet to drop my location to check in with DR LAD. He texts me that he is glad I am hanging out at *Plex and that it is good for my socialization stats to be with other clones in Corp approved settings.

My gut immediately tightens.

I text back,

trying to be better. see you next week for our check-in!!! ;))))

He doesn't like that I hang out and live in the Outers. It is a zoned part of the city that doesn't have any Corp-approved structures or living centers, though there are rumors that eventually Corp will expand into the Outers. For now it is mostly full of abandoned buildings, and regularly biohumans and spawns get busted for biohacking and squatting buildings.

Compliant clones live close and work close to the Plex in the center of the city. But upon formation I moved as far away as I could and soon found other outlying clones to live with. It's not good for his reputation in Corp to have a clone like me under his supervision, so every visit I get a lecture about the benefits of strictly adhering to my Wellness*Plan and the advantages of "clone2clone" socialization under DR supervision.

I wonder if the knowledge base I have is from the dead girl or if they uploaded random attributes from the internet and created an algorithm for a personality. Trolled my prototype's feed and wrote an equation that self-generated the content she searched for. There must have been something about her though, something about Dex's or Randy's or Tammy's, or all the other clones that roll through the Dolly and don't give a damn about the dangers of us gathering like that. At least an energy or something. You can't completely erase all those people without some kind of ripple effect.

DR LAD
 BIO*CORP
 location: CORP*PLEX
 clone: 39487
 appointment #3019

WELLNESS*PLAN

general questionnaire:

DR Questions	Behavioural Notes	Clone Response
"How are you doing today?"	Clone's posture is slumped and appearance is shabby. Pretends like they don't hear my question at first so I must repeat it.	"Fine."
"Do you have any pain?"	Clone fidgets. Picking at their fingernails.	"No more than usual."
"How is your daily performance?"	Clone looks at me confused as if I haven't asked this question before. Hesitates again.	"Good."
"Are you taking your medication as prescribed?"	Clone looks me in the eye.	"Yes."
"Are you going to work?"	Clone's gaze shifts back to their shoes.	"Job ends in a week."
"What will you do then?"	Catch clone rolling their eyes briefly.	"Go to the JOB*PLEX and register again."
"Are your emotions still balanced?"	Neutral expression.	"Yes."
"I don't like the clones you hang out with."	Direct gaze.	"That's not a question."
"I'm ordering you blood tests and a normalisation training to deal with your socialisation stats. That's not a question either."	Clone continues to look at me.	"Can I go?"

Order:

Blood tests, check for vitamin and mineral deficiencies, as well as white blood cell count
 Normalisation training

Follow up:

Job

Emotional Balance, I don't think medication is correcting depression

I maintain my body by taking eight different pills everyday. Each is a unique shades of blue. Before I take them I line them up in a gradient from light blue to dark. Dr LAD says the pills keep my body's systems functioning.

Age is confusing. The girl they found was about twenty-five, I was told, so I tell people I am twenty-four if they ask. I have been twenty-four for a while now.

You are my liability, the company doesn't know I spawned you. Once Dr LAD pointed to a picture of you in a magazine, next to an article on your new film. He said *It's weird but she looks exactly like you, but more girly, like longer hair you know?* & I laughed while I sweat said, *Wow that's so weird* and quickly changed the subject.

If they found out I spawned you without reporting it we'd both be compromised.

Statistically you shouldn't even be alive, spawning is supposedly a rare occurrence. Bio*Corp says there is only a .03% chance, but on the spawn forums it seems like a higher percentage based on the chat history.

I didn't know what was happening when you spawned, except the memory of the pain in my gut, unlike anything I had ever felt before. The fabric of my physical existence was breaking from the inside, I could compare it to fire, but honestly metaphor doesn't suffice—it was pain, coming from all over my body, all at once.

I was on a bus heading the to the next city, two hours away, to visit a friend from the forums when I felt the first signs. Before you made it out I ran down the aisle and slammed the door to the tiny bathroom, heaved into the toilet bowl, thinking I was going to be sick. I blacked out when you began to crawl out of my mouth a full grown adult. Saw the crowning of your head covered in blood and bile. Woke up on the bus bathroom floor, went to sit next to you, basically naked, except for my sweater clumsily pulled across your body. You looked up to me in a daze. We exchanged a few words, told you my name, then I got off at the next town and left you in the bus with a change of my clothes.

One clone wrote about spawning on a thread that they had spawned twice. I shudder at that thought. It's very painful, totally unpredictable and only typically when the clone is under extreme stress. Tammy meditates everyday hoping it will never happen to her, takes rounds of herbal tea for the nervous system every few hours compulsively from bottles she carries around with her when we're out. Since I spawned you she bossily leads me in breathing exercises every morning, squeezing my hand hard when I should breathe in and releasing on the breath out.

Those decisions at the time felt like the right thing to do, but I wonder now why I left you there. After spawning I diagnosed myself with some kind of postpartum depression. Couldn't get out of bed for months afterwards. Only after I saw you in your first underground film a couple of years after at the Dolly was I able to find you again. In the shock of recognition I quickly scribbled your name down from the credits and got a friend to find you on the forums.

*who exactly r u?
Your clone, from the bus
...yr fucking w me
No its really me
where are u?
In the city
2 the north?
No the east, the outers
why r u contacting me?
I want to talk
u left me
I know...*

*...
I'm so sorry...*

*...
I regret it everyday
how did u find me?
I saw you in a film
my new 1?
Yes the new one*

*...
Can I write you? I'll explain everything*

*...
Please?*

*...
Please, let me explain
make sure its encryptd. heres the address...*

sent: july 9 2030

hey- i'm glad you wrote. it's taken me awhile to know how to respond.

my bitterness towards you is like a blade. i hope it will dull eventually, but for the time being it's very sharp.

coming into the world with no point of reference was painful; those first months were the worst of my life. i try not to think of them. i've only recently gotten a grip on any kind of stability or reality.

my first day on earth i slept in a dumpster behind a stripmall. the first week i was so sick from shock i could barely move. the first time i had access to a tablet i researched "birth" only to find out i came out the wrong way.

i am happy you have contacted me, but seriously, fuck you. leaving me was complete cowardice. i'm scared that if i let you in you're going to leave again. i have a hard time trusting people generally, and so far you haven't given me much to work with. so, you better not become a ghost again. things are already too hard. -ruby

The first time I met you in the flesh was about three years ago, shortly after we started corresponding. We sat at my kitchen table drinking coffee and eating pie you brought over. Its filling was a vibrant red. Strawberries? Raspberries? I can't remember the taste, just the color. We talked quickly. We knew our being together was dangerous, but that it was important to meet in real life. For me to explain my actions. For you to begin the long process of accepting those actions.

I remember something you said vividly, and those words stuck in my brain like the red did,

Hunger does not precede fullness. It is a life. I am empty though I act well; this is our commonality.

This memory of you catapults my mind to the moment when I saw you for the first time in a film. You are severely injured, your organs falling out. You are walking up a hill at night, to the top where you let loose a loud and long laugh to the dark night's stars.

Spawns like you are not on med lists, so you don't take eight pills a day. Your medical history is not legal or liable for coverage. Your organs are constantly failing in various ways, one after the other. When you go to the organ bank you pay in cash. Buy on sale. Add to your existing debt. Dodge the debt collectors, who are rumoured to collect bodies if payment is not made. You hope the salary from your new film will make enough to cover your debts. You worry that your body will break at a rate more rapid than your rate of earning, leaving you either further in debt or dead.

A biohuman who lives in my neighborhood confronts me in the store. Tells me she saw me entering the Medi building at Corp; tells me she knows I am a clone. They think we are corporate technology bent on a takeover. I want to tell her I did not ask for this. I want to tell her I was born out of death. I want to ask where is my agency to takeover if I cannot function without their medicine every day? Instead, I quietly shake my head and keep walking. In my basket were oranges, a package of synthetic meat and a can of soda. Clone survival guides forgot to tell us how to breathe when biohumans are trying to out us.

My knee joints were in pain, so I walked slowly out of the store around the corner. Sat on the sidewalk to peel an orange and put the entire thing in my mouth. Didn't bother to separate the sections. Mouthing things in full feels better when I get the feeling: *I did not choose this.*

Choice is a faulty concept as far as Wellness*Plans go DR LAD explains to me. I have many small daily options as a clone but little choice. *Clones are fortunate to come into a life planned out for them in many ways. We make adjustments accordingly to be sure. Without the stress of choice your immune system is stronger.* DR LAD concludes with a smile. *Now, on a scale of 1-10 please rate the amount of pain you're experiencing today...*

sent: December 17 2030

hey- the sound of cars pass outside and i'm looking out the window to a snow covered landscape. i have been staying in this house for a while now. i met patty on a spawn forum. she's helping me establish myself a little more. connecting me to people that make fake IDs and help us find work. i'm trying to think of a name that i like. did corp name you, or did you get to pick it yourself? funny i've never asked you that. patty found her name in an old magazine, biohumans think it's a tacky name, but then assume she's a weird biohuman. i've been using ruby as my name for acting so maybe i'll keep going with that. another person that lives here helped me get a job as a phone sex worker. i talk on the phone for about three hours a day. i have never had sex though, at least with another physical body. another spawn in the house told me that they would like to have sex with me sometime, but i declined. i copy erotica from the internet to the people on the other line and listen to them getting off. mostly they tell me what they want to hear anyway and i'll parrot it back.

another friend here and i sit on the porch and he asks me questions about what i want. griffin is the first person to ask me that. he tells me spawns are special, and that, in a way, we get to have an unregulated relationship to desire separate from Corp, which seems to often control and normalize biohuman and clone desire. this he says is why we are the lucky ones. he speaks in a way i don't totally get. he's really into conspiracy theories, and when he begins on those i space out. i told him i wanted to be a famous actor, that i had already been in some underground films even. he grinned at that and said a spawn that was a celebrity right under their noses would be a big fuck-you to the cloning industry. he is very kind and very sick. he told me he doesn't think he will get better from this round of illness. we sit on the porch, him in his wheelchair and me on a swing hanging from the beam. we talk but also are together in silence while he smokes cigarettes and writes poems. i watch the steady stream of traffic pass in front of the house. the snow piled high on either side of the street.

patty's house is old, smelling faintly of mildew and body odor. it's decorated everywhere with potted plants and newspaper clippings about spawns taped to the walls haphazardly, certain names or portraits circled in pen. she has an open door policy for spawns in need of a place to crash, she is well known on the forums and people even joke her username should be *SurrogateMom_1*. she wakes up early every morning, even hungover, to make the house coffee and throw some cat food into the backyard for the strays that hang around.

i like these winter mornings because usually we're the only two that are awake so we'll sit and drink from chipped mugs together, both wrapped in blankets because the heat doesn't kick on until later in the day. patty tells me i should go have some fun, go out with her and her friends. patty sells illegal prescriptions, recreational and psychotropic drugs to biohumans, and hangs out at clubs to sell. i have never done drugs. i have been alive for such a short time i am learning the edges of my body and emotions, and *everything*, even the most boring things, seem new and i am devastated by how hard and sharp all these stupid things feel. the emotional and physical pain is braided together, so it's difficult to tell when i'm experiencing

physical illness or emotional distress. they seem to come together as far as i have observed from my body's patterns. i tell patty i don't think i'm ready to do any drugs. patty says *it's cool, babe, no pressure*. she is able to maintain her body because she makes so much money from selling. she has her own unlicensed organ replacement technician and everything.

i also babysit a biohuman's baby who lives down the road. patty is the parents' dealer and she hooked me up with the job. i sit in their living room with the baby on my lap and put earmuffs over its tiny head and listen to their old music albums very loudly on the family's soundsystem. mostly the songs talk about love, which i don't really relate to, but it is good research for my acting. i think the baby can tell i'm not a biohuman. maybe that's irrational, but i have a feeling.

i have been reading on the forums about clones. do you know that the first clone was made psych-inpatient forever? she tried to bomb the biotech company where she was incubated. It was on the news about ten years ago. they hadn't made bugging or personal tablets for clones procedure yet so it was pretty easy for her to make a bomb unnoticed. DR LAD is probably terrified of you, terrified of my potential from within you. maybe i have talked to him on the phone, heard him coming in a weird croak. mostly it's wealthy biohuman men on the other line; the price is pretty steep, though I don't get paid all that well. not a big surprise, one fantasy i get asked to play out often is that of the DR/clone relationship. i always play the clone, the irony kills me. i'm close to you but far away. write back soon.-ruby

meditation #2

We look to the body for inspiration: its ability to communicate across and with systems of incredible difference.

I went to see DR LAD recently. From the inside crease of my elbow they take eleven plastic vials of blood labeled them "CLONE #39487" and then my name. They have been looking for something. His voice keeps getting stuck in my head:

Fever?

No

Headaches?

No

Blood?

No

Diarrhea?

No

On a scale of one to ten, ten being the most pain, where would you rate yourself?

A two.

DR LAD smiled because he believes that he is keeping me from pain. I have stopped telling him the truth about my body, that there is a deep seated knowledge that something is very wrong. Eventually he finds something in the blood work. *Your white blood cell count is low, we need to do tests, it's very serious. Come in on Tuesday morning. It could be lymphoma, radiation exposure or liver disease.*

I run my hand over the bruise inside my elbow.

Though you are not a product of Corp you have even less choice than I; there is increased rate of bodily failure, a possibility of termination if discovered, and an increased rate of stress because you must create a Wellness*Plan from scratch in a world bent on killing you.

In your latest box-office movie I remember you coyly sipping through a straw on screen listening to your love interest in a crowded trendy bar, the DR talks to you while the music swells. In this fiction you, the clone, overcome all odds and save the DR's life and then together discover the antidote to a super virus that is killing off biohumans. However, with careful observation of the film it is clear that all the complex character development is reserved for the DR. He is portrayed as a cold-on-the-outside-caring-on-the-inside, cunning intellectual, with flowing sandy colored hair, glasses and pale skin on the brink of translating a mysterious sequence of human genetic code. There is a moment you nod your head slowly while he says the words *It's not too late for humanity, there is still time for me to discover the cure*. And I swore it felt like you were looking past him, to me.

Sent: October 5 2031

hey- everyday on set the feeling that I have no agency in this production multiplies. i'm slowly learning that the Director's even more controlling than i thought. i am eating a piece of toast with marmalade while i write this, drinking coffee spiked with whiskey and sitting on a stoop. i have so much pain in my gut. everything i eat hurts, i have stopped trying to avoid pain. it's hard to survive when it feels like your body has preemptively decided you're gonna slowly starve yourself. sometimes i feel like a babysitter for my own flesh suitcase whose parents totally left town and abandoned me to my own self-destructive devices.

a woman stopped to ask if i was who she thought i was, and i replied *yes, i am ruby penny...* and that i was in that movie. the woman asked for my autograph. all she had in her bag was a cheap romance novel so i signed the cover. my name now scrawled between some half-naked heterosexual couple embracing on a beach.

she asked me what i do for fun. i wanted to say *recently one can usually find me in my bathroom doubled over and throwing up*. but instead i said, *the cast all goes out after shoots together. we love dancing!* the sad thing is that is what i mostly do with my time when my body is able to fake it. i mean of course it's all for show, but the constant performing is really getting to me right now. last night i was out at a benefit for the producers, mostly corp people. i was charming and moving between them, conversation was easy. it's incredibly simple to convince people i'm fine, that i'm having fun, that i fit into their world. it's really just a game. one of the producers started hitting on me and offered me coke so we went to the bathroom. we'd snort some and between they'd ask me in a loud voice *HOW IS THE MOVIE GOING??? I LOVE THE DIRECTOR! SHE'S SOOO GREAT(!!!) she's great* i answer. smile, snort, repeat, until i could make up an excuse to leave the stall. i'm glad i got high though, makes those things more bearable. it all becomes such a ruse.

just like this toast i'm eating is a ruse to make the passersby believe that there is an order to things, namely, a belief in the maintenance of the body. just as my fake ID is a ruse for my employers to believe that there is an order to things, namely, that this body was born in iowa in 2005.

though i know it's completely impossible, i imagine telling this woman the truth of my identity. seeing the look of horror when she realizes who i am really am. i want to start making films again that do that: horrify people. confuse them. change them. anything except this placating shit i've been turning out.

like i can't stop imagining an ending to a movie where I burn the theater down. you are maybe the only person who knows the rage i contain costumed in composure: the ethics i have built around trying to eradicate fear by purging out everything, the sham i deeply believe i am, the desire i have to do something outside of my selfish world. it seems laughable that all i am doing right now is sitting on a stoop chewing this stupid toast slowly into a mush while waiting to go

into makeup. all the while constructing a politics around a disembodied rage that could tear a movie screen into shreds, coolly walk away in sunglasses while the whole thing explodes and then get into a car and drive into the sunset. i guess this is what it feels like to sell out.

i'm embarrassed my only insurrectional activity is this correspondence with you, though for now i suppose it is enough, maybe more than enough when I think about it on good days. how much change can two failing bodies catalyze anyway? it seems like a rhetorical question, but i'm genuinely interested in your thoughts. please write back soon, everyone else is so boring. -ruby

meditation #3

Pause to imagine the extrabiological objects in your life that facilitate meeting the needs and desires of your body. (*ex: the amino acid, tryptophan, which can only be obtained from certain foods and is processed through the digestive system. It is the precursor for serotonin, the neurotransmitter primarily responsible for feelings of well-being. Other examples: medication, water, oxygen.*)

Now think of how those objects that you ingest are directly connected to the state through production, control, accessibility and/or [a/e]ffect. How is your objective reality (those pills, that banana or glass of water) coupled with governance and policy?

Recently we met on the ferry. It is my favourite meeting spot since it is beautiful, in constant motion and quite hard for anyone to overhear conversation. You wore a wide brimmed hat to keep your face shadowed so we would not draw attention. I told you quite nervously that I had started to take testosterone. You were not surprised or judgemental, and for this I was grateful—you even joked that soon we could walk down the street together without as much concern of getting called for our likeness.

It feels like a quiet means of refuge. I am bargaining to make my body more liveable under present circumstances. I went through the approval procedure at Corp for hormones and DR LAD was glad I had taken an interest in my Personal*Subjective*Development. Endocrine treatment for biohumans and spawns is nearly impossible to access, but for us within the Corp system it is quite easy. Some clones medically move between genders often. We talked about complicity; my body is changing and I like it. However, I feel ashamed that some things are easy for me. You said,

You are complicit, sure, but everyone is in varying degrees; we're "born" into these conditions, even spawns. The difference is what kind of care and work we put into building new scaffoldings of relation. Even if for now they are secretly enacted out only between us and a few others.

Before I spawned my life felt like an illusion—veiled—some substance or material filtering my senses. There were cracks of light, sharp sensation, but mostly dull numbness. When you broke my body open the veil fell away, and my eyes still have not adjusted. I am constantly navigating after images, hovering bright sparks that I take to be ghosts or floating lab coats or guardian angels from my peripheral vision. The feeling intuitively that you're always behind me. It's a kind of care. The undeniable reality that we are contingent even from afar.