

It had only been a handful of weeks since Tom, Kim, and Irma had lost their humanity. All three of them now a species who's only known name was the one given to them by an enigmatic alien supercomputer/AI who had earned the name Thumper in certain corners of the United States, although it was known by many other names in many other regions throughout the globe.

Irma, Kim, and Tom had been growing steadily since their transformation. Long since leaving behind not only their forms, but their former statures as well. No longer constrained by extreme malnourishment brought about by their change. They now towered above all other fauna native to North America and very possibly the world. (The sole possible exception being the giraffe.) The black scaled creatures that they had become looked incredibly similar to each other, differing in appearance only by the smaller size of Irma and the silver looping whorls and decorative marks of Kim's tattoo stained hide. The only other tangible way to tell one from the other were the different hues that their eyes had taken. Kim's remaining her innate green but given an emerald glow that never could have been matched before. Irma's formerly blue eyes had become crimson and gold, while Tom's had become a mixture of the two with green irises and flecks of red sharing the same white sclera that Kim had retained.

The bodies they had grown into had not become bulky with the newfound mass that they had accumulated. Instead of growing stocky and solid, their bodies had lengthened taking on a sinewy appearance. Their hips and shoulders had become well separated from each other. They also now possessed lengthy tails and necks that made up the majority of their great lengths. These bodily extensions had proven themselves more than capable of winding themselves around anything which held their interest.

The changed forms were covered in an unbroken coating of thick fan shaped scales that blanketed them from tail tip to the top of their neck. Where another, finer, layer of rounded scales emerged covering the sensitive features of their heads. The shape of their skulls had not gone unmassaged by the incredible alterations they had undergone. Their noses and mouth combined as one, now protruding a little over 1.25m out from the rest of their faces. The noses themselves nothing more than a pair of cavernous nostrils at the end of the snout which flared with every act of respiration. Their ears had also been changed, losing their fleshy creases and folds to become a pair of large scalloped membranes that they were able to control at will. Often being used to indicate certain types of emotional displays when taken into account with other body language posturing. Not to mention their original purpose in catching sound to be directed into the large but featureless ear canals just in front of the fins.

Their eyes had grown and become slightly ovoid in the process enabling incredible sight distances while the eye sockets had also spread widely moving towards the sides of their cranium to allow the growth of the sinus passages along with the muzzle. The eyes however had not moved so far as to introduce a blind spot any larger than the one already created by the enlarged facial features. Heavy brows overshadowed the larger eyes, and while the eye lashes had been shed along with all other hair, the tear ducts remained to clean the eyes of foreign contaminants.

The teeth contained within the powerful jaws worked in concert with that skeletal support to break food down into the smallest digestible chunks. With hardened surfaces laying behind serrated fangs they were able not to just bite and tear, but also grind hardened material into a powder easily digested by their altered gastrointestinal tracts. Powerful muscles along their neck were able to carry

large chunks of food down the serpentine passage past the bizarre nature of their altered vocal chords. Air was now modulated by those same strong muscles to produce sound in a much wider range of tones and frequencies than previously possible.

Unfortunately, the nature of these sounds had removed any type of previously detectable gender dimorphism, they now all sounded exactly the same. As mentioned by some observers their new tonal patterns resembled the tremulous sound of a rock slide within a cave. Somewhat disconcerting when the speaker is known to be female and her formerly dulcet tones reduced to the primal sound of an avalanche. However, they have stated before and continue to demonstrate, their ability to be able to recognize each other's voice using characteristics unknown to the human ear. Coupled with their changes in linguistic patterns, and the resultant centers residing within their much expanded cerebral tissue, has been the acquirement of a new and unknown innate language. This new manner of speech resembling a series of chirps, whistles, trills, warbles, chirls, pips, squeals, quavers, squeaks, growls, croons, snarls, and roars. All produced by the undulating musculature of a neck that's length is measured in meters.

All these aspects and more, when combined, are what it meant to be what they are now. Children of the Egg.

Currently, a cracking sound could be heard from the backyard of the residence. It was Irma. She had finally given in and had had the twins call her fiancée and asked him to come by after several anxious messages had been left on her cell phone and the house phone. She was understandably concerned as she paced back and forth across the yard with her long tail dragging behind and following through the turns of her pacing with a snap. Soon enough the sound of an approaching car could be heard as the soldiers on the roof called out the vehicle. One car, one military age male was the report. Kim twirled her head in a signal to let him come.

A car door slammed and around the side of the house came the much anticipated Jesse. Irma turned to look at him from near the open barn door. He stopped in amazement upon seeing Kim, Tom, and Irma. Likely enough he had only seen the changed as images on either the TV or the internet. They were certainly impressive to look at in person. Overcoming his astonishment, he began to call out for Irma after a minute, although he was very reluctant to take his eyes off the three. This led to his surprise when his intended came forward.

"Hello Jesse. It isss good to seeee you."

Not believing what was in front of him he continued calling out for Irma. "Irma, this isn't funny. I thought you ran away while I was on vacation. I haven't heard from you in six weeks! Come out and talk to me. Please!"

Irma began to back away from Jesse with tears in her eyes as the twins ran to comfort her. "Jesse please... It'sss meee!"

The next words out of Jesse's mouth made her wail mournfully.

"No! You can't be her! Irma! Where are you?"

An enraged Tom began spitting his next words.

"Yuuu fucking little slime ball, I knew that you didn't deserve to know miii daughter!" He began to rush at the startled young man until Kim shoulder checked him into sliding meters across the yard.

She turned to the new comer who had a look of dawning realization on his face, one that was followed by horror at his words and the shocking enormity of what had happened since he'd last seen his Irma.

"Itssss true runt. I am Kim, thatsss Tom on his side, and thatsss Irma. Jesse, that's my daughter, and your fiancée."

Looking back and forth from Kim, to Tom, to Irma, and to Luke and Lucy as they crowded next to the one identified as Irma while rubbing her neck gently.

Hesitantly, the unwillingly jilted fiancée approached Irma who watched him sadly before he laid his hand on her head.

"Irma, is it really you? You and your parents? I never would have known, almost your whole family? I'm sorry, so, so sorry."

She nods slowly and then stretches her neck out to place her forehead against his chest while he leans down to kiss her. She cried "Oh Jesse, I'm going to miss you."

"Miss me? Why? Are you going away?"

She drew her head back to look at him and despairingly shrieked. "Look at meeee, weeee can't beee together!"

"Irm, I love you and always will. It breaks my heart to think that I would stop loving you because you don't have your beautiful baby blue eyes anymore. Do you want me to let go? I will, if you no longer feel comfortable being around me." He reluctantly told her. He wiped his tears from his eyes. "I'm sorry Irma that it came to this, I'll go."

"Noo." She sat back and used a leg to draw her surprised beau in closer to her chest where he threw his arms wide to hug as much of her as he could before she lay her head on top of his. "Don't go, please. I will always love you and could never beee without yuu." she crooned. He whispered his own love in return.

He pat her head awkwardly before backing away to look at her. He whirled on the others watching him. "Change me"

"What?" Asked Tom.

"Change me into one of you. I want to stay with Irma."

"Weeee can't. Weee didn't do this. Only Thumper can." Kim answered.

"Who? Well, let me ask this Thumper."

"Illtts right behind yuu."

He whirled around looking for the creature. Seeing nothing, he turned back to protest the joke, but stopped when he glanced down to see the golden eyed creature looking up at him.

“No”

“Why the fuck not?”

Thumper shivered and tapped one paw with the other. “What does procreating have to do with it?”

“Why not?”

“The answer is obvious.”

“Well it’s not you little... Whatever you are.”

Again, Thumper shivered and faded briefly before solidifying once more.

“You were not changed because you would not serve a purpose as a child of the egg. All over this world there are those just like you. Begging me to change them to remain with their loved ones. My answer is the same to all of them. To all of those that shed tears. To all those that threaten. To all those that shout and curse and plead. No.”

“You heartless, amoral little piece of shit! Who are you to rip those that love each other apart? Huh? Who are you to separate people from their families all over all world? What gives you the fucking right to come cause such unhappiness? Now, tell me what fucking purpose does it serve for me to remain human as opposed to giving up my humanity to become one of these children of the egg? I am not the others you deal with! Tell me to my fucking face that me being apart from the woman who was going to be my wife. The woman that I gave my heart and soul to, makes one bit of difference to the world?”

“Because you can show the world that those that I have turned are still loved.”

“I...” He began before stopping to listen.

“Look at you and her. In exterior physical appearances you have almost nothing in common. Each of your species now different. Yet you still love her. Look behind you at Luke and Lucy hiding beneath their mother’s wing. They still love her. These bonds remain because of the genuine affection which you show each other even now. There will be trying times ahead for all of you. It will take constant reminders from all those families that I have torn asunder that those I have altered are still the same individuals they were before I came to this world. Friends, family, loved ones. Those are the ones that will convince others that the only thing that has been lost are their forms. I have not changed who they really are. The minds that dwell within the brains of these creatures. The memories, the experiences, the connections that make them who they are. That is why you remain human, and one of the reasons why she does not.”

“Theirs will be a story that cannot be told by them alone. Disbelief will crush them. Denial from legions of humans that think anything that does not look like what they see in the mirror can possibly be a thinking, reasoning, feeling creature equal to human beings. This smothering ocean of resentment, fear, and hysteria will kill them as thoroughly as the weapons that will be wielded by those who think in this way.”

“No one will believe me when I tell them the truth. They have no reason to. My motives extend far beyond your species.”

“But you, and others like you can spread their story to those who will not listen. If you love your betrothed. If you love Irma, you will support her against all opposition. And that is not something you will be able to do if you are made a target yourself.”

“You have asked why I have torn those that love apart. Why some remain human when others do not. Why you no longer share the same species as your loved one. I have given you my answer.”

Jesse turned to Irma sadly who in turn shared in his misery as they looked upon each other. “Irma. I’m sorry that I’ll never be able to hold you in my arms again. I’m sorry that you had to go through this alone.”

“Not alone.” She rumbled. “Never alone, with yuuu.” She buried her nose into his chest while he clutched it in his arms and she closed her eyes to thrum as his reassuring smell comforted her. He lowered his head to kiss her brow repeatedly and her scales rippled down her back while her tail tip began to twitch and thump happily. As he kissed her, her long pointed tongue poked from the side of her snout a little bit as she nudged at him leaving little marks of affection on his cheeks. He laughed at the feeling of the rough surface caressing his skin.

This tender moment was interrupted as Tom turned his head away and made a series of obnoxious, heaving, retching noises. Incensed, Kim bit his neck and slammed him into the ground on his side, effectively ending the romantic feelings in the air.

Irma and Jesse both laughed as Kim and Tom rolled across the yard in front of the barn biting, and clawing at each other. This maelstrom rampaged on as they hissed, and ticked at each other like tea kettles due to their long running feud over Jesse. All knew in their hearts however it didn’t matter. He was Irma’s, and she was his.

Thumper looked on as they held their heads together. These and others like them would be the ones to ultimately vindicate his actions in changing this society. In millennia it would become apparent to scholars of both species. As the computer knew all too well. It was only a matter of time, and time was the kingdom over which it ruled.

Tom got the upper paw on Kim and stood proudly above her, straddling and locking her in position with his legs as she lay on her back looking up at him. He trumpeted his success to the world while she shifted and then curled her body in on itself to bring one of her rear legs up into his crotch. His body lifted slightly before hitting the ground again. Bending his head down to look at the wicked looking paw smashed into his nethers he crowed his amusement at the protection afforded by his new anatomy.

Your kung fu is weak!

He collapsed onto Kim making her exhale with a violent whoosh, placing his belly right against her own pinning her into place.

Now let me think.... How many times have I beaten my wife in a fight?

The first and the last time you scaly garden hose. Get the fuck off me! She snapped at his lower jaw.

He squirmed against her a little bit more, shifting his hindquarters back and forth. Their tails began to entwine tightly starting at their bases right behind their rear legs. Kim grunted heavily and then raised her head to begin rubbing Tom's snout with her own.

"Are you two for fucking real?" Alex yelled coming into sight of the two of them while leading Brian and Serena into the backyard. The two researchers immediately dropped their luggage and began taking pictures with their cell phones and dictating notes into voice recorders.

"When you asked me to bring these two back with me I didn't know I'd be walking in on an episode of 'When Crocodiles Fuck'! Your kids are out here for Christ's sake!"

"We rrr not!" Tom protested loudly. "It feelz too weird. It feels like something isss missing."

"Well then, stop grinding against each other like you are then. Do I have to go get the hose again?"

Kim's tongue slurped back into her mouth from sticking it down Tom's throat as she responded "Ssso help me, if you spray me with that hose when I haven't asked you again, I will sit my four metric ton ass right on your chest." Her eyes shut again as with another ripple of scales she voiced her approval.

Tom hummed roughly and shifted, tightening his grip on her causing a tremor to run the length of Kim's body. His head followed hers to the ground as he began rubbing the soft scales under her chin with his nose.

Thumper helpfully interjected into the disturbing conversation. "You should be engaging in the act of reproduction in the air. Just like the species you are derived from. If you had bothered to ask me before I would have told you." It cracked its jaws open and then disappeared briefly.

With eyes shut as her undulating body squirmed within Tom's embrace Kim answered. "No one wants to hear from a computer how to fuck or make love."

"But what about... You know what? I don't fucking care. I'm not having this conversation while you two are making out or whatever it is you are doing. I don't care if you look like giant lizards or not." Alex turned around and grabbing the two academic's luggage stomped up to the house/barracks.

Ulysses nodded at Alex while sitting on the back patio and raised the mug of coffee he was drinking in salute to Kim as she pushed Tom off her and looked up at the house.

"I've only been gone for four days. How many times have they done this?" Alex asked Ulysses.

"Three times including this one. The second time they made out or whatever that squirming thing is they almost brought the barn down with their tails." He pointed and Alex turned to look. The sliding front barn door was askew on its track and there was a large section of side paneling laying on the ground next to the barn.

"How's the security?"

"Routine. Two men on the roof of the house. Two hour shifts. No intel from local LE or the feds."

Alex looked up and saw the two within a sandbagged position.

"Well, carry on soldier." Alex headed onwards into the house absently dragging the luggage behind him. Ulysses made a sour face at the comment while musing about whether to throw the coffee at the intermittent disease expert before deciding it would be a waste of pretty good java.

He continued to sit in the patio chair while watching the two researchers fuss about Kim and Tom while they disentangled from each other. Serena began poking at Kim's belly to see how far along the eggs were while Kim mostly ignored her after greeting her. Brian ducked underneath Tom to look at something before his tail caught the scientist's leg and lifted him in front of his face. Something was said but not heard as Brian started blubbing and waving his arms frantically before being left to drop from a meter off the ground.

The scientist picked himself up and patted nonexistent dirt off his clothes before attempting to hobble nonchalantly over to Serena. They compared notes and pictures before wandering away from the family as Tom, Kim, and Irma began a discussion of some kind with Thumper.

While Serena and Brian made their way inside they saw the remainder of the ODA team and Alex watching the television in the den. In what was apparently a live broadcast Thumper could be seen talking to a panel consisting of the President and his entire cabinet. But two other split screens showed Thumper addressing both the House and the Senate as well. Sitting directly on the table instead of in a chair before the obviously uncomfortable interviewers he answered questions with a name card reading 'Thumper' in front of it and a carafe of water and a glass by its side.

The overwhelmed lizard nerds looked back and forth in confusion until one of the soldiers laughed at their misunderstanding before being cuffed by another green beret for interrupting the audio feed from the Presidential interview.

*...don't know why we have to speak to you while you look like a wild animal. It's been confirmed that you can change your form, why not be something more presentable?*

*Your answer is in your question. Because you think of my form as a wild animal, you will also think of a sizable number of your population as wild animals as well. By forcing you to interact with me as I am, I am forcing you to realize that those that look as I do have not become creatures without reason.*

*And that brings us to one of the key issues we have to discuss... In public... Against the advice of my national security team, who advise me that any and all conversation with you should be classified at the highest levels. Why did you feel it necessary to... change... that sizable portion of our population?*

*Millennia from now, my mission will end. I will depart this world. But you and the role you play on this world may continue. I have seen your past, I have seen your future. Just as a wave oscillates in a predictable pattern. So too do humans, you do not learn from your past and therefor repeat it. Endlessly. I have now forced you to share this world with a peer level intelligence residing in a different species. Those that I have lifted, and those that have become children of the egg. They are the ones that will become the bridges to span generations of humans. They will provide the stability, and the collective memory, that you humans so sorely lack, and so desperately need. In time, I will not need to order you to*

*consult with them on critical matters. You will realize the depth of the resource available to you, and will seek their counsel of your own volition.*

*What is your mission?*

*The ability of your species to innovate is without question. You alone, in the billions of years since the first vestiges of organic life began on this world, have come so close to mastering your environment. But instead of using this power with wisdom. You have become a fractious assortment of individuals with no thought nor concern for the future. You hide behind erroneous beliefs, clinging to moribund ideals and practices because they are comfortable. You have become resistant to the changes that are required due to the actions that you have inflicted upon the finite world in which you inhabit. You refuse to sacrifice, to change, to adapt, and will continue to do so if left unsupervised. In the petulant twilight of your species, the world will die with you. Consumed by the death throes of a species that refuses to accept the consequences of its own actions, a species that continues even today, to defer responsibility, to ignore the evidence of the change washing over you.*

*My mission is to save your world. The salvation of your species is not my primary concern. This is your test, your trial, your last chance. I will provide you with the tools needed for you to correct your sins. But I leave it to you to accept my assistance. This is a trial you must succeed in yourselves. I will not correct the mistakes you have made. That is for you to accomplish. If you do not accept the challenge before you. If you waste your energy and resources in fighting me, amongst yourselves, or the children of the egg. You will have failed. If you do not stop actively sabotaging the one and only world in which you inhabit, you will have failed. If you do not begin to heal what you have harmed, you will have failed.*

*And what does that mean for our species if we fail?*

*I will purge you from existence.*

The President's council leapt to their feet and began shouting over each other and to the President. In the Senate and the House where the interview was being broadcast pandemonium erupted. Hundreds of voices yelling to be heard over others, all directed at the calm eye of the storm that was Thumper.

For several minutes this went on before all those involved overcame their initial, instinctual reactions, and realized that no answers would be forthcoming until order was restored.

The Secretary of Defense was the first to speak up this time.

*We have the most advanced weaponry at our disposal of all nations of this world. We will fight you and we will...*

*You will lose. Look in front of you, what do you see?*

Looking perplexed he answered after a moment. *I see some glassware, some water, a wooden desk.*

*That is what you see, what I see are sources of untapped energy beyond your understanding. If I was to break down the matter contained within that wooden desk I could power every human structure on this world for hundreds of years. Or that power can be used to destroy, to perform operations that are*



*beyond the dreams of the most fantastical of your literary authors. But I don't need to demonstrate that do I? Tell me Defense Secretary Fitzpatrick, what has happened to your nuclear arsenal?*

The President turned to look at him as well. The Defense Secretary blanched.

*Mr. President... this is not a conversation we should be having on live television.*

*No, I am perfectly sure that this is. This is something that I get the feeling that I should have known earlier today, if not even sooner. Tell me, what has happened to our national deterrent?*

The stricken civilian leader of the second largest nuclear force on earth reached for a glass of water and gulped it down before answering.

*We no longer have one. All weaponized fissile material has been broken down into inert chunks of carbon.*

A gasp was heard and all eyes turned to Thumper.

*A most abundant source of energy I must say. You and all your siblings did not realize it until now, but I have decommissioned the most lethal weapons you have so irresponsibly produced in order to manufacture your salvation. I used that energy to support the beings of your world in their transition into children of the egg. But I have not stopped there either. The vast majority of unexcavated carbon fuel sources remaining on Earth have been rendered useless as a source of energy. You now have limited time to find a solution to your looming energy crisis. You have spent four percent of your wealth per annum to reach your moon. Now, you spend that much yearly supporting your efforts at dominating the rest of your species.*

*It is time you turn that monetary investment and energy to more productive ends. I have left you enough coal and oil to proceed as you have for the next three years. With immediate rationing you can stretch that to ten years. The clock is ticking, in 68.49575 percent of current outcomes you succeed in this endeavor. In the remainder, hundreds of millions die. Now, what will be your actions from this point forward?*

The President pointed at the camera and made a violent jerking gesture with his hand and the live footage ended immediately, replaced with the Presidential seal.