

# Eat Junk, Become Junk

by Stephen Gracia

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You're sweet.

The way the drops glide down the webbing between your fingers when you hold your hand close to the shower nozzle, sending a spray of water in all directions.

My light green hair forms a hood against my neck and shoulders, and I rise up from my coiled position in the tub to pull your pink fingers from the stream and kiss them lightly. A thank you for all this.

I stand fully under the rush of water and feel its heat on my blue and bruised skin, feel the dirt and the ash run off, feel the pieces of glass pull free and wash past my feet.

Where I'm from, this is more of a ritual than a necessity, but here, I rarely make it back to our home free of garbage and dried blood.

I hear you close the door and turn on the television.

There's an announcement, a shout, and the feed is lost, turning to static. The cause is nothing new, though my complicity is.

Ten blocks away, there is smoke pouring from a neighborhood, joining the horizon and giving the twilight the look of jasper set in iron. I step in front of the window and marvel at the way the sun looks from here.

There are no better worlds than this. My hands smell of gasoline and cinderblock. I've killed my lungs with car exhaust and poisoned my blood with stimulants. Still, you can't imagine how much worse it is elsewhere.

I hear the rattle of glass coming from the kitchen, signifying that you're trying to make it from the counter to the table holding two glasses, the corkscrew, and a wine bottle. I wait for the crash.

But it doesn't come, nor does the usual obscenity.

You don't hate me yet, but you might.

I have nothing to give you; we have nothing you want besides the obvious, to be able to move between planets, between stars, and without it, your people's awe, gave way to annoyance, gave way to hatred.

You want to leave so badly, but I tell you, no cities burn like these do, none lend the sun such a hue.

You call me; I step naked into the living room and find it lit by a dozen candles.

I like the way your tongue clicks when you pronounce my name. You never get it right, but I'm happy enough with your version. I treat it like a nickname.

Your arms wrap around me from behind, and I worry about my rough edges, the spines and the scales.

You tell me that my skin is like a lizard's, cooler and softer than expected.