The constant sounds of mastication have become a sort of white noise to her.

Nothing that can distract her from her Youtube video, at least. She keeps the volume at its highest setting anyway, and the captions are auto-generated. This docuseries was part of her routine now, and something as simple as a three-course breakfast wasn’t going to keep her from her daily dose of Classiefied’s Case Files.

*“You wanna talk about something* ***really*** *weird?”*

“Boy do I fucking ever.”

Lark’s jowls squished and flexed as she chuckled into the screen on her phone. Her arms rested at an angle against the fatted pits that fused with fleshy, sagging breasts that sat in her overtaxed bra like throw pillows full of cake mix. Leaning forward, her stomach cutting into the edge of the table, Lark spooned a mouthful and a half of cereal past her plump lips.

*“Let’s talk about the fact that Yeng—we all know Yeng, right? Ubiquitous company that owns… everything? Desperately trying to clean up their awful public reception lately?* ***In case you don’t—****“*

Lark had been starting her days with Youtubers since she was old enough to have a tablet. That is to say, when she was a spherical toddler getting wheeled around by her mountainous mommy, back in the days when she was still mobile. But it wasn’t until fairly recently that she had discovered Classiefied, who had been making rounds among the online community for announcing her retirement after years of various conspiracy theories. Of all the faces and all the chins available on this site, Lark was happy to stare at hers as they fed her little nuggets of knowledge.

*A woman about half of Lark’s size sits behind a desk with her hands folded. She’s styling her own merch—similar to the ones that had been popping up in ads all over the Yeng Marketplace app ever since Lark had fallen down this little Classie-fied rabbit hole.*

*It’s one of her earlier videos—she’s so much thinner than the first video that Lark had found of hers, and she wasn’t nearly as vast as she seemed to be in her most recent ones…*

*“So hear me out, HERMIA, their AI that they use for everything, has been* ***proven*** *to show favoritism towards requests that result in consumption, and that engage other Yeng branded smart home devices—”*

Lark’s stomach gurgled fiercely, despite the fact that she was well into her first helping of breakfast. There was simply no hand fast enough at shoveling that could satiate her endless appetite. A good little consumer, she had been raised on a diet of name branded products since she was old enough to waddle. With her fat little legs spread wide beneath a swelling and sagging stomach, Lark was an especially heavy girl for these antique chairs that her mother cared for so much. Of course, these things had to be at least sixty years old now. They were practically antiques—far from equipped to handle the modern woman’s physique.

*“I just… like, I think it’s* ***really weird*** *that I’m the only one talking about this. If you’re listening Tetsuko Yeng, don’t like… send a hit squad after me or whatever, ‘kay? I’m just calling it as a I see it.”*

Her heavy biceps sagged from the elbow up as she lurched forward into a point that interested her. She spread wide along the back of her seat, with her back oozing through the spindles of her chair even in an inclined position. Lark’s stomach rolls beached themselves on top of the surface of the table with a heavy overhang, puddling into a penumbra of blockage that restricted her eating more and more each day. And yet despite the spread of her stomach actively hindering her ability to indulge herself, Lark managed to walk away from every meal feeling as full as ever.

*“But we’re talking, you know, ever since HERMIA has been in play, obesity rates all over the developed parts of the world—and even in like, third world countries, the elites there who* ***have Wi-Fi****—obesity rates all over the world have just* ***skyrocketed*** *because of…”*

“Can’t you listen to someone a little more *pleasant*?” Lark’s mother snarked from across the table, “That can’tbe the healthiest way to start your day off, honey.”

*Says the woman on her* ***third*** *helping of pancakes…*

Lark couldn’t remember a time when her mother could walk. At least, not on her own. As far back as the family pictures went, she had always been heavy. That is to say, she hadn’t undergone as drastic of a transformation in her later years as some of Lark’s friend’s mothers had. She had very vague memories in her head of being carted around by her mother at some point in her early life, so she must have had *some* mobility at some point. But to Lark’s best recollection, her mother’s position in her life had always been served sitting down. Whether it was pinned down in an armchair, spreading across the couch like a ginger pad of butter, or pressed behind the wheel of a mobility scooter, Lark’s mother might as well have been just under four feet tall for all the standing that she did throughout her daughter’s more memorable parts of life—rather, for all of the standing that she *could* do.

“I mean she has a point, mama.” Lark shrugged her heavy shoulders as she glanced around their kitchen, “I can’t think of a single thing that HERMIA doesn’t do for—”

“Yes, Lark?”

“N-Nevermind, HERMIA.”

“Okay, Lark.”

“Anyway… I can’t think of a single thing that, uh, she doesn’t do for us around here.”

“I knew sending you to college would turn ‘round to bite me in the butt.”

Fork and knife scraped against the plate, Lark’s mother’s chubby sausage digits bulged over the tiny knife and fork as she sawed off another mouthful of fluffy, syrupy mush. She opened her mouth wide enough to manage to fit it inside, with little dollops of sugary brown goo dotting the corners. Her fleshy bingo wings trembled with the slight motions, sagging with age but primarily in their supreme heft as she grew ever larger than Lark remembered. It was only through the modern conveniences that Classiefied mentioned that she was able to have some semblance of a normal life.

HERMIA could cook, it could clean, and it could order groceries whenever they ran out. All through appliances with which Lark had grown up with, but were apparently quite hard to come by when her mother was a girl.

Considering Yeng’s big push in marketing this year, Lark’s mom had known HERMIA for twenty five years. That was five years longer than she had known her own daughter. An AI was five years older than Lark!

It was just… *wild* to think about something like that going bad.

But at the end of the day, it was just a Youtube series. Nothing that Lark had to seriously worry about. After all, that kind of stuff doesn’t really happen in real life.

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*“I don’t know how to say this, but like… have you ever met someone super into their smarthome?”*

*Classiefied paused to take a bite of a DoorDash delivery, round cheeks beginning to crease at the corners of her mouth with excess weight. Her dark makeup had smudged a little around the “impact” areas of her mouth. With the soft dual lighting of her pink and blue background LEDs, the slight shadow that she normally kept herself in did well to hide the curvature to her face and the subtle hang of her double chin…*

*To a degree.*

*“Mm. It’s weird—like, they think it’s normal totally entrusting every detail of your life to various electronics. Even if we ignore the fact that they’re attached to inevitably shady businesses and megacorps who just want to buy and sell your information… no, no we can’t forget that, can we?”*

*A small grunt that wasn’t in the last video as Classiefied leans forward over a tummy that wasn’t in the last video. At least, not to the same degree with which it obstructed her—*

Lark had been particularly enthralled with the last entry. Moreso than the ice cream cone that she had gotten from that truck on campus, so that was really saying something. Because the ice cream was *fantastic.*

“Oh shit, I’m late to class…”

Lark’s plump fingers clicked on the phone’s lock button, blackening its screen as the humongous blonde began the arduous process of heaving herself up to a stand. Even with the railings on all of the benches on campus, she was still very much having trouble these days. The only thing that kept her from signing up for one of those golf carts that people rolled around in was because that would have been too close to a mobility scooter, like her mom’s…

*Besides… I could probably use the exercise.*

Arching her back and heaving herself forward with belly-heavy steps, Lark lumbered down the wide sidewalks of her campus. Her fat chins bunched along her flabby chest as her arms held out to the side, swaying gently with every beleaguered step that Lark trotted. Her blonde hair bounced half a step slower than the rest of her as Lark’s blobby body wobbled and swayed with her heavy footfalls, sweat already beginning to bead on her forehead as she did the heavy labor of lugging herself around campus…

Detecting raised heartrate. Initiating automated step counter.

*Great, so it can tell when my fat little heart is gonna give out from taking a few steps, but it can’t remember to sound the alarm when I’m late to class…*

Lark lowered her chunky arm back to some semblance of where her side was, the smart watch just buried in wrist fat. Her insistence on getting the dainty little straps for them just didn’t work for how thick her stupid arms were. And walking around without this thing might as well have just been throwing her whole social life away…

*Not to mention my schedule, my tracking updates, reminders about assignments… Gawd, it really would suck if these things turned out to be evil, wouldn’t it?*

The sound of the ice cream truck’s siren playing *Flight of the Valkyries* began to fade into the background as it made its slow, speed-limit mandated trek across campus while Lark did much the same. One hand holding firmly onto a waffle cone that was two scoops high and dripping down her finger while the other rested her hand pleasantly on her stomach as it sagged low to her knees…

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*“I’m starting to get the feeling that Yeng doesn’t like it when I talk shit about their creepy, invasive business tactics.”*

*Classiefied spread behind the desk in front of her, the uppermost tier of her stomach resting nicely on the soft white surface of the typical Youtuber setup. It was undeniable that she had put on weight since she started doing the HERMIA series—sure these entries were a few months apart between other regular videos, but still. Her production values had always been good, and Lark had liked the content pretty well so far, but a lot of the appeal to these internet personality types was how pretty they were.*

*Classiefied was pretty skinny when she started, somewhere just north of two hundred pounds. But by four video entries in, a spread out between them, she had probably gained another sixty. Well on her way to becoming more regular-looking. Normally, with these Youtubers, it happened the other way around.*

“Jeef how embaraffing.”

Scheduled mealtimes were important, and burritos between classes were the only thing keeping her standing upright. Sure, sometimes she didn’t really *want* to eat them. But she needed the energy. And besides, she’d just be hungry again later.

*“I’ve been getting like, targeted ads and stuff since I started this series. Like, you know, we all get targeted ads, but like* ***super specific*** *ones. And I think that’s like their way of trying to bribe me? But sucks to suck Yeng, because before we get to that disturbing bit of Orwellian nonsense, we’ve got ourselves a* ***sponsor*** *today—****”***

**“**I gueff vat—” Lark chewed and swallowed, a mouthful of burrito joining its better half in the mound of middle currently pooling onto Lark’s lap, “—I guess that HelloFresh sponsorship wound up suiting her well…”

It might have been hypocritical for Lark to focus on a random internet celebrity’s weight gain. Because it was. But at the same time, seeing these big jumps one after the other in a compressed amount of time was just jarring. Being so late to the Classiefied train meant that she had a lot to catch up on—how could she help it if her most interesting series just so happened to be the ones spread out so far apart?

*“But on seriously—talking about targeted ads, I know that we* ***all*** *get them and that they’re super annoying, right?”*

*A pause to scarf down a chip from the bag for a poignant crunching sound-effect that will surely lead into her thesis statement for the episode.*

*“Did you know that, at the time of this video, Yeng is both working to destabilize the US Economy by endorsing and developing a new cryptocurrency, and* ***also*** *bought majority ownership of not just one, but two Japanese banks?”*

*Another pause to slurp on her soda. Bright teal liquid flows from the clear straw to her lips.*

*“Think about the next time the thing you* ***just bought*** *winds up on HERMIA’s shopping list. They’re keeping* ***track*** *of their customers’ spending habits. And if that doesn’t scream George Orwell’s 1984 then I don’t—”*

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The price to Uber a ride home from campus was steep.

Getting steeper every day, it seemed like.

But it certainly wasn’t as steep as those hills could be, and the thought of walking home on its own left Lark breathless and sweaty, let alone her actually trying to manage what was a highly improbable feat at her size. While her bi-daily surcharges might have been expensive, it was still far cheaper than trying to find a car that could fit her carriage behind the wheel.

Besides, it gave her plenty of time to catch up on her videos…

At least, it would have. But watching these things all day had absolutely killed her battery life. And her backup power bank was still at home. And her backup’s backup wasn’t working right since she sat on it.

*Ughhh… the ride home never felt this lonnnnnnnnnnng before…*

The pampered blonde pressed her cheek against the rear passenger side window of her Uber, bulging thickly from the flat surface as she looked on in pain as the seconds took their time to tick by. You never realize how *long* ten minutes is until your phone dies and there’s a literal stranger driving you home during peak traffic hours.

But if her head had been buried in her phone, she might not seen the familiar shape of the pink and blue waffle cone sitting on top of the black ice cream truck, and she might not have heard the *Flight of the Valkyries* intonating in that jingle bell pitch just loud enough to be heard through the walls of her Uber. Just for a moment, of course—the car was driving by quickly enough that it was just in the corner of Lark’s eye for a second.

*Ughhh… I want ice cream now.*

*Wait. Didn’t I already* ***have*** *ice cream…*

*That… couldn’t be the same truck.*

*It’s probably just got like a weird route, we’re already halfway home by now…*

Ice cream truck drivers worked weird hours, right? They for sure drove weird routes. But it was the same one that had always driven around campus—for the longest time, Lark had thought that it was an actual campus thing, before learning that there were still ice cream trucks that regularly drove around neighborhoods.

But ever since they got that new paint job, she’d been hooked on them. They must have been using something new in the ingredients...

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“Thanks—I’ll make sure to give you a good review.”

The driver had been patient. Thank God her smartwatch still worked or she would have had to try and get her debit card. With how tight that backseat was, there was no way in hell that her fat ass was going to be able to reach down and get her clutch after it fell in the floorboard. Not without wrecking this poor dude’s transmission. He’d even gotten it for her, too.

Lark stood on her front lawn, waving the guy off with fleshy arms whose biceps jiggled and squished their way out of her sleeve for a moment as she recuperated from getting out of that tiny fucking car. She smiled breathlessly for a moment before beginning the three steps necessary for her to turn her entire body around.

*My legs are so sore from walking around campus all day… I should really start doing stretches or something…*

*Maybe those golf carts wouldn’t be such a bad idea. You know, using just one out of the three days that I’m there wouldn’t be the end of the world…*

*Ugh, I sound like my* ***mom****…*

The steady process of getting herself back inside was one that she never held much affinity for. From when she was a chubby child getting off of the school bus to a heavyset high schooler helping to haul her mama out of the car, to now that she was a colossal college student tottering tummy-first towards those stupid railings that mama complained about pinching at her sides whenever she tried to get down the porch ramp.

Normally she could have distracted herself with the tail end of whatever video she had started watching in the car but again, phone was dead.

*I can’t get inside fast enough.*

*It’s too fucking hot out here…*

This was the hottest September that Lark had ever experienced, that was for damn sure. Almost makes her wish that she still had some of that—

*No fucking way.*

Underneath the sound of her huffing and puffing as she waddled heavy-footed to the door, she could have sworn that she heard—

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*“You know that they put, like… hormones and shit in the food, right?”*

*The time skip between this video and the one that Lark had skipped was drastically different than the one before it. Almost a full year had had gone by without update on a pretty regular series. What’s more, the runtime on this one was a lot shorter.*

*“Makes it… mmph… really addictive and hard to give it up.”*

*She was even bigger now. Much more in line with what Lark thought a regular person looked like, cresting north of three hundred pounds. It was more noticeable with the different format—the more official setup that her later videos features had originated in this video?*

*“At least that’s what I’m telling myself. If these cookies aren’t laced with like crack or something, then I* ***really*** *shouldn’t have brought these onto my desk when I started filming.”*

You’ve been watching a lot of Classiefied’s channel, Lark. Did you know that she has a channel on Yeng Streaming? I could add it to your watchlist. Just say “Yes.”

Lark intentionally held her breath, finding herself somewhat unwilling to answer to an A.I. after all of the videos she’d been consuming today. Settled down on the couch with her automatic foot warmer squished under her cankles, The barrel-built blonde skipped to the next video. Maybe to one that was a little more interesting.

***Yikes****, this chick gets* ***fat.***

Another wicked little smile as Lark witnessed Classiefied’s inflating figure—the recommendations list showed her the last one in the series, and there was a whole chin featured in the thumbnail that wasn’t there in the one that Lark was skipping from.

Okay. Would you like to know more about content creators like her in the future?

Lark rolled her eyes. Maybe if she just answered the stupid thing it’d let her pick a video.

“Yes, HERMIA.”

Okay. Adding mukbangers to your list of interests.

*How the hell do you tie conspiracy theories and mukbanging together?*

Taking her thumb off of the small SmartTV remote, Lark had settled on just skipping to the end. At this point, she was kind of just looking to be done with it for the day. It was really starting to creep her out, and the sooner that she finished up the better. Were these videos better when she first started out?

*…when did she start mukbanging? Does she have a second channel or something?*

*“Okay. So. Legally, I am obligated to tell you that almost all of my sponsors, apparently, are actually… Yeng affiliates. And retroactively, this means kind of a lot for this series.”*

*Classiefied shifts uncomfortably in her chair. Well over four hundred pounds by this point in her career, Lark would have been remiss if she said that she wasn’t perplexed and somewhat enthralled by the large jumps in this woman’s size.*

*Knowing that there was still some more to go before she reached her absolute biggest just made her more curious, if anything.*

*Obviously she started after this..*

*“And, uh… I have to, you know, clear up some things about what I may or may not have said about the parent company now for… litigious issues. Very expensive litigious issues.”*

*“So I kind of just want to set the record straight. Everything that I say here is fully intent to be conjecture, and interpreted as entertainment only.”*

Lark furrowed her brow at the sound of thedryer going off in the closet, her concentration in the latest entry to her video essay series interrupted by the incessant and shrill melody. Her mama kept it so loud so she could hear it from wherever she was in the house, but did it have to be so *annoying?*

Da-da-da-daaaa-da-da-dadadaaaaa-da

…She’d heard that melody before today, hadn’t she?

“This is going to be the last entry in this series for obvious reasons, but I don’t want you to think I’m done talking about conspiracy theory stuff! Just not this specific conspiracy theory.”

“But in case you guys **are** interested, I’m opening up a second channel where I talk about this stuff while doing mukbangs. I’ve been getting nonstop requests from you guys about the videos where I eat, so I figured—”

“Ugh. Figures that she’d sell out…”

*Da-da-da-daaaa-da-da-dadadaaaaa-da.*

“Lark, honey, would you mind getting my Hot Pockets out the microwave?”

Had she really had them this long without realizing that the dryer and the microwave both had the same jingle for when they were done? Sure, mom was always buying new appliances as they came out, but… had it always been like that?

“Laaaark can you hear me? I’m *starvin’*!”

*Somehow I doubt that…*

The hydraulic lift in the loveseat squeaked and creaked as she raised herself to a semi-stance, mustering a herculean push to haul herself up the rest of the way. Up on her feet, Lark began the treacherous waddle to the kitchen.

Lark, a scan of your fridge says that you’re out of Hot Pockets. Would you like me to add them to your shopping list, or is this an error?

“Uh… s… sure. Thank you, HERMIA.” Lark said with a cautious glance to Classiefied’s frozen, triply chinned face frozen midframe on the smart television, “I think we’ll be fine for now.”

A small pause.

Okay. I’ll make sure that they’re added to this week’s shopping list.

As Lark opened the microwave and the smell of her mother’s midafternoon snack filled her nostrils, she couldn’t help but feel like maybe she had spoken too soon. Maybe it was just the videos, or the fatigue of walking around on campus, or the squealing that those gears on that old loveseat had to do to get her standing, but…

Something about today was making her a little uncomfortable.

“Actually, HERMIA, I changed my mind.” She said, cautiously glancing around her smart kitchen, “Remove them from my shopping list.”

A long, long pause. One that dragged on for so long that Lark almost thought that the AI hadn’t heard her. But that just simply wasn’t possible.

I’m sorry Lark, I didn’t catch that. Did you want me to double your usual order of Hot Pockets?