

> Game data initialization in progress.

Those bold words flash across your consciousness.

> Progress:  0%

The world fails to manifest.

You're stranded in the dark void.

> Progress:  5%

A brief pulse runs through you. Like a shiver in your spine, you're momentarily overrun with an intense, almost electric current. Static hisses in your ears. Harsh, yet quiet. It's almost as if a TV is running the fuzz a room away.

The seed of discomfort within you finally begins to bloom. Left. Right. You swing your head around in this featureless void. Every other direction exhausted, nothing to see, you look down.

Instantly, you're engulfed in dizzying panic.

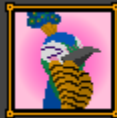


“Wha—”

Right in front of your dumb lil’ eyes staring past your jaw-dropped beak, the tips of your talons unweave. Your toes dissolve to rudimentary polygons. Then, to wireframes.

Ultimately, to nothing.

That jolt from before? That’s how it feels to have your soul marked for deletion.



“**A-ah!**” You leap up in a hurry. Wings spread, you totter from foot-to-foot.



“**Stop the machine!**” You beg. “**None of this is right! This isn’t supposed to happen! I-it’s like what happened at the start of *Screen Wipe*—that h-horror movie!**”

Oh, how desperate you are to toss off this curse. You shake your foot wildly, like you stepped in something nasty. And when that clearly doesn’t do the job, you up the ante.

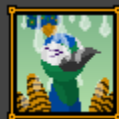
That horrible static sound crescendos. Your legs wipe away. And your heart is ready to
explode.

The pounding in your ears has never been louder. Crying out like a wounded beast, you
scream for the cabinet operator. Scream for dozens of people surely milling about
closeby. For anyone—anything—!

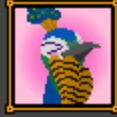
> Progress: ██████████ 46%

But who can hear you? *How* would they hear you? You're not even given the grace to
be on a screen anymore. You're in the data dump: damned in some lonely corner of the
cabinet's hard drive. Not even given the privilege of having an illusory world to occupy.
You're damned to be slowly being taken apart. Ripped and reused whenever the
computer deems your data is more useful to be elsewhere.

> Progress: ██████████ 53%



“**Please...**” You croak, ugly fat tears in your eyes. Your nostrils are shiny with
just-trickled snot.



“I don’t want to die...”

You drag your half-deleted body by your trembling wings. You focus your blurry vision upon your wingtips. And see that, they too, are beginning to disappear. Their yellow tips break into that dreadful weave of glowing lines. A bloom of light slowly creeps up your limbs. Searing your flesh away, it’s only a matter of time before you’re nothing but a limbless, feathered nugget.

> Progress: ██████████ 61%

You can’t even crawl anymore. You’re an imbalanced ball with stubby limbs and wild eyes. Your long neck is splayed out across the floor. Beak agape, you breathe heavy. Hoarse. High, whistling breath dries your throat and aches your chest.

> Progress: ██████████ 69%

Amongst the tumultuous hurricane in your mind, you briefly enter the eye. Clear thought returns one petrifying question.



What will they do with my body?

You're still out there, y'know? Your mind is in here. But your flesh remains in the physical world. These events are rare. You thought they were something made up for the movies.



“Will they just throw me away? No—they wouldn’t. It’s such a rare thing.”

> Progress: ██████████ 75%



“I’ll be on the news. Television. Like I... always dreamed of doing.”

Your heart stops. Because you don’t have one anymore.

Yet you live on. Shackled to life, you are—until your digital brain is shredded and recompiled into some NPCs meandering dialogue. Or trash loot’s flavor text. Maybe you’ll live on as the coding for AI, if you’re lucky. But most likely, you’ll be scattered in a million pieces. In the landscape. In the particles of magic and fire. The sound, music, voice, and art.

You'll be everywhere: diluted into unrecognizability. Like how the air you breathed contained one molecule of the same air as the first dinosaurs. Past tense, because your lungs are gone. You're just a tube uselessly sucking down air. In one end, out the other.

> Progress: ██████████ 84%

And as you dissolve away, your last thoughts are of abject terror. Not just of death, but the horrid idea that you'll keep on living. A miserable in between where you're just a shredded consciousness literally ground into the dirt. Too fragmented to form words that would describe your constant suffering. It'd just be pictures. Flashes of emotion. Hope that someone would unplug that cabinet and let you die as RAM would be flushed.

> Progress: ██████████ 92%

But this arcade never powers down. Zodia City thrives at night. There's always money to be made.

Enjoy your time in hell.

> Progress: ██████████ 99%

The only way you'll find peace is if this place burns to the ground.