

# Creature of the Night

You

Your beak, ears, (sometimes) tail, (sometimes) mane, and lack of arms  
are out of a mythology textbook

You can speak, move, dance, purr

Your fur in all colors of the spectrum

Your odd shape which most find impossible to categorize

And others demonize

Truly, nothing separates

you

from me

Except your core

doesn't breathe

Whirs and watts working since the bewildering 90's

What

kind of arcane abomination are you?

It has been changed beyond recognition

A cryptid in Goodwill corridors and antique thrift shops

Sometimes extending long, enveloping the web with your enigma

Sometimes lying low in forgotten corners

in closets, attics,

the trash cans

of memory

You used to lie dormant, everywhere

Purpose long gone

**But fret not**

**we've found you now.**

---

The creature in my hands feels soft to the touch as I flip it upside down, its unmoving body letting the examination proceed. To be completely honest, I never once thought in my life I would be looking forward to this. Not hunting monsters through the darkest of woods, or documenting supernatural activity in the city as I may have led you to expect, but spending my allowance money on a weird toy from the 90's.

"It needs AA batteries?"

I had spent weeks looking for one. At first, I was just weirded out by the Furby memes and "cursed" creations, but I quickly came to find them endearing in their own odd way. Especially because the community behind them was so full of open, welcoming, and creative people. The recent Furby—particularly the oddbody<sup>1</sup>—resurgence originated in social media sites like Tumblr, which I scrolled through continuously in the middle of the night, entranced by just how much content there was. Users would name their Furby children and give them distinct personalities, posting pictures and videos of their daily adventures in parks, forests, supermarkets, anywhere that would allow it. Beyond that, there were tutorials on how to "skin" your furby to clean or modify its fur, how to swap out its eye chips<sup>2</sup>, how to dye its mane, how to extend its body to achieve the sought-after longified look—clearly, it had hatched a very involved niche.

And not without reason. Although they may just be electronic pets designed by two dudes who drew inspiration from tamagotchis, the toys were conceptually distinct from the bunch. "It on purpose was made to let you believe it was alive." Said Caleb Chung, who with co-inventor David Hamptor created Furby. "All electronic toys up to that were 'squeeze my hand and I'll count to ten, and if you're not- you want to play anymore? No? Ok'", he then proceeds to mimic dying<sup>3</sup>, "Y'know? A very self-centered

---

<sup>1</sup> This is what takes the main stage in the cursed scene: major body modifications aiming to make Furbies appear even more "odd" than they already are; just absolutely pushing it to the extremes. There's the Forb, an orb of fur with many faces and feet comparable to the experiments of the human centipede, but rounder and, y'know, much less gruesome. There are furby "loaves", which have had their faceplate transfused into a thicker, larger plush body. Now that I think about it, I'm kinda tempted to make an encyclopedia of Furby creations, monsterology-style.

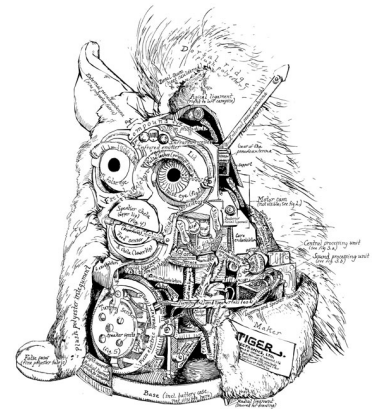
<sup>2</sup> A common method involves sticking two hot glue sticks onto a Furby's eyes and then leaving your beloved fur gremlin in the freezer for a while. Seeing a furby with sticks coming out of its eyes is. Not very pretty, as you can imagine. But when the glue is firmly attached you can pop the eye chips right off!

<sup>3</sup> Caleb has, in fact, worked as a mimic before. Pretty cool dude.

toy. And so, it became human in a way that other products hadn't been. It became human and present, and people thought that was scary, and weird, and freaky, because it encroaches on being human.”<sup>4</sup>

Yes, Furby was made to seem alive to the families and kids who first took it out of its box in the late 90's. But beyond that, Furby reflects a fragment of humanity, in a way: the embrace of the “odd”, and feels even more alive today than it did on the day of its conception. It feeds from the creative contributions it has received over the past few years, becoming so much more than it was initially intended to encompass. Our community tends to dismiss societal conventions, and praise the deviant; Maybe because a large part of us has been alienated by our own deviancy at some point in our lives. I remember feeling extremely frustrated with my body, back when looking in the mirror made my skin crawl.

A great portion of modern Furby owners, especially oddbody enthusiasts, is comprised of queer, neurodiverse, and/or disabled people. Furby itself is canonically nonbinary<sup>5</sup>, and not only a trans icon, but a great source of comfort to those who identify beyond the boundaries of male and female (me included). Above all, Furbies remind me, in their many varying forms, that everyone and their body is deserving of love regardless of how odd others may find it.



6

---

<sup>4</sup> *What's Your Story, Caleb Chung?*, 2014, <https://youtu.be/HPhEWIreoxk>.

<sup>5</sup> From the Official Furby Trainer's Guide, Q&A section: "Q. *How do I know if my Furby is a boy or a girl?* A. *Furbys are similar to angels. They are not divided into male or female—they embody the best of both. Some people theorize that you can answer this question by the pitch of the voice, but we like the angel theory more!*"

<sup>6</sup> Kelly Heaton, 2000, *THE FURBY(TM)*, 2000, [http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~kelly/Furby/anatomy/THE\\_FURBY\\_HQ.htm](http://alumni.media.mit.edu/~kelly/Furby/anatomy/THE_FURBY_HQ.htm).

## Bibliography

Mufson, Beckett. "Long Furby Is a Hot Dog-Loving Robot That's Coming for Your Soul." VICE, May 29, 2018.

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/evkvz4/the-short-history-of-long-furby>.

Mufson's article takes us on a fantastical virtual journey: the birth of the first long furby and the subculture that stemmed from it. It explores how this exotic specimen—who is ingeniously named LongFurby—reached the spotlight, and introduces us to the person who created her, as well as many other people involved in the Furby community.

To illustrate the internet phenomenon, Mufson embraces the web's peculiarities. As to set the groundwork for the Furby community, the opening paragraph mentions various odd phenomena found in Tumblr.com: from people's desires to smash the clown from IT to the creation of recipes for edible Tide pods.

This source informed me of some of the origins of the Furby community and its creative nature, the humorous tone inspiring part of my writing. Additionally, it reminded me of Furby's gender-defying nature and other similarities I share with the toy.

Sung, Morgan. "The Oddbody Furby Community Turns '90s Kids' Toys into Lovely Nightmares." 10 July 2019. Web.

Sung interviewed multiple people involved in the oddbody Furby community to unravel its mysteries, presenting several variations of Furby that are usually deemed "cursed". Her article encompasses statements explaining the customization niche's appeal and importance, clarifying why it has found such traffic throughout the web.

Similar to Mufson's piece, Sung utilizes the language of the medium (read: internet) in order to paint an accurate picture of the bizarre niche, presenting different magnificent specimens such as the Furby "loaf", or even a Furby with resin human teeth in its stomach, standing on demon legs. The inclusion of such images juxtaposed with the wholesome explanations of their creators awakens great intrigue.

This article pushed me to want to include oddbody creations into my work. Additionally, it informed me of how they particularly struck a chord with disabled and neurodivergent people, seeing Furby as a form of comfort.

*What's Your Story, Caleb Chung?*, 2014. <https://youtu.be/HPhEWIreoxk>.

The short documentary gives us a look into the mind and history of Caleb Chung, one of the two designers behind Furby. It not only covers his creative process, but narrates his life leading up to working on the toy and gives us a sense of his bright personality through humorous anecdotes.

*What's Your Story, Caleb Chung?* tells the creator's journey designing Furby, showing its innovative concepts and early instances in an entertaining fashion. It effectively manages to get the viewer to know what ticks in Caleb's head, informing us of his background and main values in order to make him seem like a breathing, living person.

Knowing what role Furby was created to fill was essential in my research in order to fully grasp how it has evolved over the years, and Caleb himself offered a lot of entertaining material to work with.

## Intention Statement

“Creature of the Night” started out as a lyrical essay about Furbies. I wanted to write something that came easy to me, where both the reader and I could have fun, delving into the cryptic world of these electronic creatures. But as I researched and wrote, I started questioning why a specific part of the internet fixated on them, and why they appealed to me in particular. In the first section, I write of Furbies as if they were a cryptid I was directly talking to, using lineation and white space to create a suspenseful pace. I also include alliteration to increase the drama of the opening poem, which contrasts heavily with the following section. I then insert myself into the essay and adopt a more narrative style, describing my shifting attitudes in regards to Furby to give the reader an entrypoint into the topic. My research sources were particularly helpful in finding a tone that felt the most appropriate, each of them bringing some sort of playfulness appropriate to the toy I felt was important to include—be it different Furby modifications, curious internet facts, or its creator’s jolly personality. Really, these little pieces of joy helped me gain a new perspective on why exactly the Furby appeals so much to me, explored in the last paragraphs. While not in the bibliography, I was particularly inspired by the creative footnotes I encountered in David Foster Wallace’s *Consider the Lobster* because I wanted to establish a direct connection with the reader while including some interesting trivia. During peer review, my readers enjoyed the mystic tone of the opening poem, but suggested that I don’t reveal the subject’s identity until later on. I had initially given more clues through word choice; Words like “lying low” had been originally more passive—in this case “tucked away”—which indicated the unliving nature of the toy. Ultimately, I think holding that sense of suspense for the first page makes it a more engaging read.