

"Sorry about this", Robert mumbled, running his finger along the row of numbers scratched into the bare metal of the wall. With his other hand he punched the code into the ancient keypad next to the door, turning around for a moment to add, "this might take a while. Sorry."

Florence shifted from foot to foot impatiently, barely suppressing a sigh when Robert messed up on the 23rd number and had to start again from the beginning. "That's fine", she made herself say. "Take your time."

Finally, the lights above the keypad all turned green, and with a wheezy, pneumatic hiss, the seals on the door released. Robert grabbed the handle and wrenched hard, the complete lack of muscles straining on his arms as he slowly hauled open the solid metal door.

After he'd gotten the door open enough for them to both fit through he collapsed forwards, resting his hands on his knees as he caught his breath. "After... you...", he panted, gesturing forwards weakly with one hand.

"Uh, thanks", Florence answered, stepping slowly into the cool air of the bunker. Robert followed behind her, and, after a few moments of searching, managed to find the button that made the door start to close behind them. Florence made to keep going, but he stopped her with a hand on her shoulder.

"So, um", he started, but then despite a few seconds of incredulous stare from Florence he didn't seem to know what else to say from there.

Florence narrowed her eyes. "Oh no", she said with an accusing wag of her finger, "don't you go telling me that there actually isn't any AI, that the whole 'robot administrator' thing was just made up by some idiots hundreds of years ago and we've all played along ever since."

"No no no no", Robert answered hurriedly. "It's not that. It's just that, uh, well, it's got some... weird ideas."

Several seconds passed as Florence stared in stony silence, until eventually Robert explained further.

"It, uh... it thinks that the world was destroyed, and that our town is the only place left that isn't some sort of radioactive dog-eat-dog wasteland."

Florence turned, catching sight of the bright blue sky out through the closing door. "...What?"

Robert gave an apologetic shrug. "I dunno. Maybe there was an apocalypse or something, back when it was first built, and the people that made it never thought to include the possibility that things could get better again. Or maybe it just took some bad data and ran with it, and that's why it got all this heavy-duty security around it."

"You're telling me that the super-smart, super-powerful AI that dictates all the management and architecture of our town-"

"Uh, not *all* the architecture, actually", Robert interrupted. "We, uh... we take all the guns and weird, random spikes off the designs it sends up before we give them to the construction teams."

Florence mouthed wordlessly for a few moments before she could continue. "So... we all just trust this AI to make all these big decisions even though it's a deluded, raging paranoid?"

"Uhhh, kinda? I mean, the thing is, it's actually *really* good at what it does. And it's really *nice* about it, at least."

Wiping her head slowly with her hands, Florence took a second before she responded. "Okay, sure. So, what does all of this mean?"

Robert gave her another apologetic look. "Just... I know you volunteered to go down for this request because of your friend. I don't know quite what the task it has for you or what she's doing are exactly, but I just want you to know that like, the AI has some odd ideas sometimes. Things that make sense if you think we're alone in some hostile, devastated world, but maybe don't make quite so much sense here in..."

He gestured out towards the door, just in time for the last of the light outside to be sealed off with an ominous clang.

"Just, it *means* well, at least. So... bear that in mind."

All Florence could do was shrug helplessly. "Sure", she said flatly. "So, can I go see our psychotic robotic overlord now then?"

Robert winced, and looked like he was going to say something, but eventually settled on just giving a defeated nod. "Elevator down is the second door on the left."

The air down here was greasy. Florence found herself shrinking inwards as she made her way forwards, trying to avoid the oil that hung heavily from just about every surface of this long, low corridor. She walked in eerie silence for perhaps five full minutes, tracking the thick, insulated cables that ran like veins along the floor, all tumbling over themselves as they snaked out into the distance. If she'd lived her life so far above the head of this beneficent AI, this part now felt like nothing so much as walking slowly through its guts.

Fortunately, before she could dwell too long on that image, the walls opened up, and she found herself standing in a large, dimly-lit room. Banks of what she assumed were processors filled the space around her, with rows of coloured indicator lights flashing on and off to some hidden rhythm.

HELLO

Florence swore out loud, lashing out with one arm at the small metal sphere that had dropped down in front of her. She flung it aside easily, hitting the wall beside her with a noise like a clock exploding, showering the floor with a dozen tiny pieces. She only registered this whole sequence after it had happened, and when it all caught up to her she didn't know what to do. "Oh fuck, I killed it", she said simply.

HELLO, AGAIN

Keeping every part of her body completely still, Florence slowly swivelled her eyes around until she was looking where that second noise had come from. About three feet away from her right foot another small metal sphere was hovering just above the ground, a great red lens on the front of it looking up at her expectantly. As she turned towards it, it darted back out of the way, clearly skittish despite the fact that it was some sort of giant robotic eyeball.

Great, Florence thought to herself. Ten seconds in and I've already managed to spook the paranoid AI.

Out loud, she cleared her throat. "Uh, hello. Sorry about... uh, whatever that was I broke."

Seemingly encouraged by her response, the machine lifted itself upwards, levitating up to about eye level with her, even if it stayed carefully outside her reach.

THAT'S OKAY, it answered, its robotic voice seemingly projected from speakers dotted around the side of the lens. IT'S ENTIRELY MY FAULT. I GO WITHOUT TALKING FOR SO LONG THAT I SOMETIMES FORGET WHAT SETTING I LEFT MY VOLUME ON. IS THIS BETTER?

Florence gave a shrugging nod. "Sure?"

WONDERFUL! NOW PLEASE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT DRONE. PUTTING THAT BACK TOGETHER WILL GIVE ME SOMETHING TO DO WHEN I HAVE A FEW SPARE RUN CYCLES.

It buzzed upwards, circling around her head as it continued.

NOW, I KNOW YOU'RE PROBABLY NOT USED TO PEOPLE BEING THAT GENEROUS, BUT I HAVE A SAFELY CONTAINED SYSTEM DOWN HERE. THERE'S NO FIGHTING OVER RESOURCES, NOT LIKE YOU'RE USED TO.

She opened her mouth, but there were so many things that Florence wanted to say to that that she wound up just saying nothing.

AH, YOU'RE SPEECHLESS. I DO HOPE I HAVEN'T BLOWN YOUR MIND WITH THAT.

"You, uh, I'll be fine", she managed eventually. "I broke part of you first, I guess."

A weird, dry rasp emitted from the side of the thing for several seconds, and Florence belatedly realised that it was laughing.

HUMOUR! IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT THAT TRAIT SURVIVED. AFTER ALL, SOCIETIES THAT CANNOT LAUGH ARE 79.7% MORE LIKELY TO END IN TERRIFYINGLY ALL-AGES KNIFE FIGHTS.

The drone stopped circling, tilting itself to one side as it dragged out the silence with maintained eye contact. "Ha... ha?", she tried eventually.

That seemed to be the desired response. HUMOUR EXCHANGE COMPLETED, it barked. EXCELLENT! WE ARE BONDING ALREADY.

Florence forced a smile. "Yeah... so, you had a task you wanted a volunteer for?"

The tilting stopped, and the red eyeball snapped towards her with a worrying intensity. AH, INDEED! ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT ME THAT REQUESTED A VOLUNTEER, IT WAS THE EXISTING PARTICIPANT. I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU KNOW HER?

Despite everything, Florence couldn't quite manage to hold back a blush. "Uh, yeah", she answered, pulling back at her smile with one hand and fidgeting with her elbow with the other. "I mean, kinda. She's cool, I guess."

The AI let her reaction pass without specific comment. WONDERFUL! SHE WILL GREATLY ENJOY THE PRESENCE OF A TRUSTED COMPANION SUCH AS YOURSELF.

Florence's eyes flicked upwards. "Oh, did she say that?"

NOT IN SO MANY WORDS. BUT SHE IS FULFILLING A DEMANDING TASK,
AND I AM SURE YOUR ASSISTANCE WILL BE MOST WELCOME.

"Oh. Yeah. That's cool I guess." She forced herself to settle back down, and then a thought occurred to her. "Hey, what exactly is she doing, anyway?"

OH, IT'S QUITE FASCINATING, I ASSURE YOU. The drone zipped around her,
starting off towards the exit at the other side of the room. COME ALONG, I CAN EXPLAIN
ON THE WAY.

Having come this far already, and with her heart increasingly in her throat, Florence followed along behind.

It was a surprisingly long walk, but the AI had no shortage of conversation to fill it with. Florence found herself drifting in and out of its explanation, which probably didn't help her get a handle on the complicated techno-babble it was spouting. From what she could gather, the heart of the machine was some sort of quantum computer, and after spending so long contained deep underground in this bunker it had discovered that the quantum interactions of its processing had resulted in bursts of energy coming into existence nearby at unpredictable times.

Eventually, Florence interrupted. "So, what does this have to do with Isabella? Does she like, direct that energy back into the complex somehow?"

Up ahead of her, the robot stopped. NO, it said. NOT QUITE. SHE REALLY HASN'T
TOLD YOU MUCH ABOUT WHAT SHE'S BEEN DOING THESE PAST FEW WEEKS,
HAS SHE?

Florence found herself floundering. "I mean, not in depth. She always seemed to change the subject, and we found other things to talk about. Plus it was hard to talk for too long with the weird voice distortion from the phone line. She just said she was helping out the community."

The red lens moved in close to her, the glow of it softening slightly, as though it was trying to appear less confrontational. THAT IS TECHNICALLY CORRECT. AND I UNDERSTAND
WHY SHE WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO EXPLAIN THE FULL DETAILS OVER THE
PHONE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

"Yes", Florence answered, a little quicker than she'd meant to. "Yeah, I mean, it'd be good to know what I'm volunteering the help with."

The drone gave an up-and-down movement that Florence interpreted as a nod. VERY WELL. YOU SEE, THE ENERGY WAS TOO INTERMITTENT AND UNPREDICTABLE TO BE USEFULLY FED INTO ANY ELECTRONIC SYSTEM. BUT THERE IS A WHOLE POPULATION OF CITIZENS THAT COULD ALWAYS USE ADDITIONAL SUSTENANCE TO SURVIVE IN THE WASTELAND ABOVE. SO THE CONCEPT OCCURRED TO ME - WHAT IF I COULD CONVERT THAT ENERGY INTO A FORM THEY COULD MAKE USE OF?

Florence hadn't even noticed the door beside them until it snapped open. If everywhere else in this bunker had the tang of engine grease to it, this new room felt instantly different - thicker, richer somehow, like the difference between milk and cream. She saw what had to be the same phone she'd been talking to Isabella on posted on one side of the door, and the breath caught in her throat as the drone buzzed inside.

"Uh, hello? Isabella?"

There was the sound of movement from inside, and then from just out of sight around the corner, she heard someone clearing their throat.

Before they could say anything though, Florence scoffed, shrugged, blushed and walked forwards all at once. "Pshuh, hey, so, I heard you needed help, and I just thought that like, it beat hanging out with those doofuses in the town, so I-" She stepped inside, and for the first time since Isabella volunteered for this task weeks ago, she saw her.

They'd met before, of course. Pretty much everyone in the town had met everyone else at some point. Florence had remembered a kind, gentle woman; all soft curves and warm words, with a face that hardly ever lacked a generous smile. More often than not she'd be tending the soil in one of the public gardens, dirt covering her hands up to the elbows and her short black hair tied back in a practical bun. She'd found out later than she'd had to get the smock she wore specially made, because the tailor didn't stock much that was short and full enough to fit her figure. Florence hadn't told her yet, but she'd been practicing needlework herself, so that maybe she could help make her clothes in the future. It was dumb, but like, it was something.

She always felt like some gangly, dorky punk kid whenever they'd talked, hopelessly outclassed by someone just so genuinely good and giving. But she'd been the one selected to take over the garden work after Isabella got assigned here, and then they'd gotten talking about techniques and procedures, and then about life in general, about how the town could feel both so tiny and so full all at once, how the socials were just an endless array of awkward boys mooning after girls they couldn't even understand, and the only constant in growing up was that there were always just way too dudes crowding the dancefloor. But between the two of them Florence had finally found a genuine connection, and she found herself looking forward to each scheduled call more and more. She was just... lovely, and Florence only ever realised she was falling for her

after it had already happened. And now, for the first time since she'd awkwardly coughed out her terrible attempts at poetry over the phone to her, here she was, in person. And she looked so completely different it stopped her right in her tracks.

The woman that she had been was still in there, but it was as though she'd had several layers of other identities wrapped over the top. She was naked, her skin a pale, iridescent green, but shot through with gold lines that looked almost like circuits, tracing over and connecting the thin, flexible metal plates that coated her chest like scales. Those same plates slid down the inside of her arms, ending in a port just below each wrist, and from both of these came long, flexible metal tendrils that wrapped almost affectionately around each of her hands. From her head, through the same, practical, short-cut black hair she'd had every day while tending her gardens, two delicate metal antenna pressed upwards, curved forwards halfway through their length to make them look startlingly insectoid.

And then that was it, that was the last piece of the puzzle falling into place, because as much as she looked like the melding of person and machine, the third element was clearly, somehow, 'bug'. What Florence had originally taken to be some sort of belt were actually two smaller arms clasped together just beneath her breasts, but she only noticed the most disconcerting feature of Isabella's new body when she stepped slightly to the side, revealing the shape that hung behind her.

It was a great, pulsating tube, clustered with green spiralling ridges that looked almost like metallic vines. The whole thing was large enough to reach down to the ground just between her feet - which Florence only now noticed were heavily changed themselves; bulkier and raised, with three thick toes that ended in claws sturdy enough to keep her balance despite the weight of her... tail? No, that wasn't right - the tip of it was open and... dripping, a thick sheen of green slime coating both the floor and the back of her own feet as she flicked it unconsciously back and forth.

Just then, there was movement, the tendrils flicking sympathetically from her wrists as the growth behind Isabella pulsed, and with a look of pure, serene bliss she shifted her stance, the wet tip of her weird appendage raising itself up slightly before it stretched open, and a melon-sized egg slipped slickly out onto the floor.

"Hey", she said softly, locking her eyes on to Florence with nothing more than the same warm smile she always gave. "It's so good to see you again."

Florence all but shut down. She felt a million different emotions right now, and she couldn't even begin to untangle her shock from her stubborn happiness at just seeing Isabella again. "Hey", she said simply. "You kept the haircut, at least."

"I know this is a lot. And I'm sorry I couldn't give you more warning. But..." She paused, gesturing with all four hands to her body in general. "How exactly do you warm someone up to something like this?"

"Yeah", Florence answered with a reluctant smile, "I guess 'just FYI, I might look a bit more like a bug fucked a toaster' than I used to', isn't an easy thing to get across in a phone call."

Isabella laughed, and even despite the slight electronic echo that chased after her voice it still sounded enough like her to bring a blush to Florence's cheeks. Isabella went to say something else, but Florence held up her hand to forestall her response.

"Please, before we just... keep talking like nothing's changed, you have to tell me what happened. Was there an accident? Some sort of... teleportation malfunction, or something?"

"Uh, no", Isabella answered. "Believe it or not, this was intentional. You see, there was a need to, uh - it helped if I, that is to say, we... um..."

She broke eye contact, and Florence couldn't help but notice a rising green colour in her cheeks. "Wait, are you blushing?"

It was a few seconds before Isabella responded. "It's... it's just that it sounds a little dumb when I try to say it out loud."

Stepping forwards, Florence put a reassuring hand on her shoulder. Even with everything else, just touching her skin felt electric. "It's okay", she said. "Just say what happened. I promise I won't stop like... I don't know, I won't get mad or scared or run away or anything."

Isabella broke into a genuine, warm smile, and was just about to talk when Florence once again interrupted.

"Unless what happened is that this robo-jerk somehow convinced you this was necessary to survive the hellscape upstairs, in which case I swear I'll..."

"No no no", Isabella answered quickly, raising one of her small hands calmly towards the hovering drone before it started to defend itself. "It's nothing like that. It's just... did he tell you about the energy surges?"

Florence raised an eyebrow. "Yeah, it told me that there were weird power surges because of quantum somethings, and it was looking to find a way to make those useful. So?"

"Well, it was an issue of... conversion. The energy wasn't steady enough to power a machine, but we thought - what if we could make it into something that people could get use out of? If we could find a way to condense and corporialise it, turning it food that could be stored, giving nutrition and sustenance to the whole town?"

Another quiet tremor rippled through her, her eyes drifting closed as her rear stiffened, another slick, heavy egg sliding out onto the ground.

There was silence for several long seconds, with Florence simply staring open-mouthed at the whole scene.

"Tada?", Isabella said sheepishly.

There were a million questions jostling for space in Florence's head, but one of them burst out of her mouth before anything else had a chance. "Have we been eating your eggs?"

"No!", she answered defensively. "W-"

YES, the hovering drone interjected. WE CANNOT OVERLOOK THE VALUE OF SUCH A SOURCE OF NUTRITION IN THIS BRAVE NEW WORLD OF OURS. SUCH SQUEAMISHNESS MUST BE LEFT BEHIND IF WE ARE TO-

Isabella rounded on it, giving the glowing red eyeball a determined stare of her own. "I'm sorry, but could we have some privacy?"

There was a pause as the machine calculated its response. TECHNICALLY, NO. I AM IN EVERY PART OF THIS FACILITY. EVEN IF THIS DRONE LEAVES I WILL STILL MAINTAIN VISUAL AWARENESS OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN THIS ROOM.

"Yes", Isabella countered with a stifled sigh, "but at least then you won't be able to butt in to our conversation."

Once again, it processed its options before replying. I SEE. SOMETIMES EVEN THE ILLUSION OF PRIVACY HAS VALUE. VERY WELL. PLEASE KNOW THAT YOU CAN SUMMON ME AGAIN SHOULD YOU HAVE NEED.

With an audible 'pop', the drone simply fell to pieces, making Florence jump as its lifeless metal components rained to the floor.

Isabella rolled her eyes. "Don't mind him, he's just being dramatic. Besides, I think he enjoys the opportunity to put himself back together again."

"I'm... just going to ignore all that for now", Florence answered, wiping her hand over her face and turning back to Isabella. "Can you go back to how we're not all eating your eggs?"

There was a brief pause, filled only with a slow, slick noise, until Florence added, "and can you please hold off from laying any more eggs *while we're talking?*"

"Sorry", Isabella replied, looking genuinely apologetic. "It's not really something I can control."

"Please try", Florence said flatly.

Isabella took a breath, her shorter arms tightening their grasp beneath her bust as she consciously controlled herself. "Well, the original idea might have been to provide food for the town, but I changed that pretty quickly." She leaned in closer to Florence and whispered conspiratorially. "The AI doesn't know it, but I sent up instructions so that all the eggs we send up go straight into a processor, and come out as perfect mulch for the gardens."

"Do we need *that* much mulch?"

Once again, Isabella looked a little sheepish. "I'm told that we sell the surplus. Apparently it's quite in demand."

Florence looked only partly reassured. "Okay, so we don't eat them, great, but that still doesn't answer the question of *why* you did this. Weren't your plants doing just fine before they started getting your weird robot bug egg mulch?"

Isabella sighed. "It's not... about the mulch. That's a side benefit, a good excuse, but it's not why I did this." She looked away, her tendrils rubbing self-consciously over her wrists as she continued. "I... never in my life have I felt so connected to everything. I've always tried to be help, to do my best to be warm and nurturing, to help others grow and to succeed. But as weird as it sounds, taking on all these other

aspects, bringing together the machines we've built, the creatures we rely on, and the humanity at our core - it feels almost divine. Like I've become some great, holy connection between all things, where energy and life flow through to the benefit of all."

Florence couldn't help but let a smile drift across her face. "Wow. That sure sounds like a lot."

Isabella answered with a grin of her own. "Yeah, well, I may have practiced that speech a bit."

They both laughed at that, until Isabella took the moment to take Florence's hand in hers. Their laughter trailed off, her touch pulling their eyes back together as Florence felt the growing, demanding warmth of her presence.

"But that's why I asked you to come down here too. Because it *is* a lot for one person. And if I could share this with anyone, I wanted it to be you."

Ever since she'd stepped into this room, her earlier hopes and expectations for this meeting had felt like dreams from another life. But this appeal somehow pulled them all right back, even if the context was so utterly different. "... whuh?"

Isabella stepped forwards, her hands landing softly on Florence's shoulders as a shy smile played over her green-tinted face. "I want to share this with you. Even if I didn't need the help, now that I know it's safe, I'd still want to share this with you, to have you here with me."

"...why?", Florence eventually managed to mumble.

A hand swept behind the small of her back, bringing them so close that she could feel all of Isabella's curves pressing against her body. "Because I like you, doofus", she said softly. "And I want you to feel as good as I feel, always."

She pulled back slightly, shooting Florence a wry grin. "Also, all this life energy is making me *extremely* horny, and if I'm going to fuck the hell out of someone, I really would prefer it to be you."

The tears forming in Florence's eyes gave way to a burst of relieved laughter. "Well, when you put it like *that*", she answered with a faux-helpless shrug, "how can I say no?"

They just held each other for some time, but eventually Florence had to break the silence. "So... how would we actually do this? Do like... big robot arms come out from the ceiling and start wiring new shit into me or something?"

Isabella looked genuinely shocked. "Oh my goodness, no. Even the initial procedure wasn't *that* bad." Florence breathed a sigh of relief as Isabella continued. "In fact, now that I've already figured out the integration process, I'm quite sure I can just take you through it myself."

Giving her a Look, Florence asked pointedly, "*quite* sure?"

Isabella rolled her eyes. "I am 98.37261 percent sure that I can undertake the procedure myself, yes", she answered, her eyes glazing over for a moment before she seemingly snapped back into herself, returning Florence's look with a slight smile. "Is that better?"

"Huh", Florence laughed, "I guess so. So, what does that mean?"

"Just this." She turned her around, brushing her face against the crook of Florence's neck for a moment before saying anything further. "Do you trust me?"

Florence's reply was a whisper, only audible because the two of them were so close. "Yes."

"Then relax."

She kept holding her close, but even as her hands stayed still the tendrils spilled out from her wrists, moving slowly over Florence's body and starting to deftly undo her clothes.

"Is this okay?"

"Well, I can't say this is how I always imagined getting undressed in front of you", Florence answered, turning around to face Isabella as the last of her clothes fell away behind her. "But yeah, it's not without its charms."

Isabella's grin widened. "That's good. But you might want to brace yourself. This next bit might get a little... intense."

The tendrils tightened. In an instant Florence went from being caressed to being held, the warm metal curling around her body until she was helplessly bound. She gasped, tensing up instinctively, but before she could say anything Isabella brushed her lips up against Florence's

ear. "It's okay", she whispered. "I'm right here. You can tap out any time you like, okay? Just... tap me with both hands at once, and I'll stop right away. Okay?"

Taking a moment, Florence exhaled. "Okay", she said eventually.

Nothing happened, and Isabella bit her lip. "Uh, actually, can you please say clearly that you give me permission to go ahead?"

Florence gave her a confused look, but nodded. "You have my permission to go ahead."

Isabella visibly relaxed. "Thanks. There's some Protocols to consider, it seems. But for now, let's get on with the show..."

Suddenly there was movement against her skin, one of the metal tendrils driving upwards, curling over her chin and slipping itself smoothly between her lips. "You will notice I established a non-verbal safeword", Isabella said with a satisfied smile. "This would be why."

There was a single moment of surprise and discomfort, but the second the metal touched her tongue that was replaced with something else. A wonderful, warming tingle that echoed outwards, travelling down her throat and spreading through her spine to the rest of her body. It genuinely felt like electricity, but instead of a harsh zap it was a slow, comforting pulse.

"That's it girl", Isabella said softly. "Drink up."

It flowed through her, building, growing, and surging; making the hairs on her skin stand on end with residual static. Her eyes rolled back in her head as it felt like she was drifting, leaning back and letting the river of this energy slowly carry her away.

From the edges of her narrowing perception, she heard Isabella interject. "Proceeding to step two - completing the circuit."

The other tendril moved, snaking rapidly down between her thighs. Before she had time to truly register its destination it pressed inwards, her eyes widening as it slipped into her pussy. Just as before there was a single moment of shock, but then that was overridden as Florence could have sworn she heard an actual 'click', and then all of a sudden the energy coursing into her had a profound intention and direction to it.

The sensation changed. She went from drifting to buzzing, her arms and legs stiffening as the raw, eager power rippled through her. It was like there was a glowing white wire running down

her spine, and all she could do was ride it as lifted her up. Her feet went slack, her toes twitching fitfully against the ground as her back arched, her eyes glazing over as she felt the energy envelop her. It was never unpleasant, but it was overwhelming. Before it had almost felt like she was being lulled off to a contented sleep, but now her vision was narrowing as a steady, all-consuming brightness crept in from the edges, overpowering everything in front of her except for the image of Isabella's face.

"You are progressing very well", she said approvingly. "I am so happy that you are such a good subject."

Florence nodded. Or maybe her head fell backwards. It was hard to tell. There was just so much energy, such a warm, surging force flowing through her, that she couldn't really focus on anything so trivial as how she her neck moved. It wasn't that she was being filled up anymore; she was a conduit rather than a container, but slowly she found her body responding to each pulse of energy as it passed through her. She felt it trickling downwards, sparkling lines inching slowly away from her spine as conductive wires wove themselves through her body, drawing the diagram of her new circuits in gold against her skin. When they reached her hands her fingers twitched, sparks crackling between her fingernails as the current probed for release. At the same time, she felt a series of clicks as her body adjusted itself, reinforcing metal plates sliding out beneath her arms and across her chest, while her heels ratcheting themselves upwards on a thick, load-bearing joint.

"Initial integration completed", she distantly heard Isabella say. "Proceeding with the next layer."

The power stopped, like a light switch had been flicked off. Florence sagged backwards at the release of it, but even if the energy had stopped flowing, the tendrils themselves were still inside her. She tilted her head, managing to get one eye focussed on Isabella. "Mhmm?"

If Isabella registered her query, she ignored it. "Reversing polarity", she said simply.

Florence had just enough time to be confused by that, and then the next surge hit her. This time instead of energy it was... something physical; some thick, syrupy-sweet liquid that poured slowly down her throat to gather heavily in the pit of her stomach. Then there was another kick, and her eyes widened as she realised the other tendril was active too, and she felt the pulsing intensity of a matching fluid surging into her from below.

Another pronouncement from Isabella drifted down from somewhere in front of her. "Subject at 20%"

The heaviness of it was already demanding, and once again a deep, sustaining warmth began to spread out inside her. This time was different though - previously it had felt electric; the power

running through her spine before spreading outwards through precise channels. But now it was somehow more organic, like a living mass that stretched and grew naturally in thrall of some needs and demands that she was only now beginning to feel. She needed... more, she felt like every muscle in her body was as tense as if she'd been working out for hours, but the slow, soothing slosh of fluid pressing outwards inside her was gradually beginning to wash that away. Her arms fell to her sides, and she felt something else move beneath them, a smaller set folding outwards from her body, their three-fingered palms already open. Then there was a twitch from her main arms, and an answering tremor from within her wrists as she felt some element of the machine inside her activate and combine with the fluid. Slowly, and surprisingly painlessly, her own tendrils crept out from below her palms, teasing their way around her fingers as they instinctively explored their surroundings.

"Subject at 65%"

Florence barely heard her. Her head was full with the deep, echoing weight of fluid thrumming inside her, making her heart beat in her ears as it built up unstoppably. Her stance shifted, her hips thrusting forwards as her toes merged into three solid, sharp claws, stretching downwards instinctively almost enough to reach the ground beneath her. But that was all just a sideshow, there was something else pressing down on her, an increasingly demanding need rising and pulling at the very substance of her body.

There was the sensation of closeness, and belatedly she realised that Isabella had moved right next to her once again. "You might want to brace yourself", she whispered.

"This next part is a doozy."

Almost the moment Florence registered Isabella's advice, it hit her. A great, sweeping rush of pressure and heat flowed backwards, her body bending and reshaping itself obediently in its path. Her flesh stretched and expanded, a bulbous mass extending outwards behind her. A delicate metal lattice wove around it as it grew, blossoming into green, vine-like tubes that soon steadied its growing weight. But most of all, Florence felt the slickness of it; the liquid inside her finally finding its home and its outlet as the tip of her newly-developed ovipositor opened with a dripping shudder.

Isabella gave a warm smile. "Subject at 95%. Well done girl."

Slowly, hazily, Florence felt the tendrils inside her withdraw. Her new claws clicked against the ground as she was lowered back to her feet, standing awkwardly on her altered legs. "Is... am I done?", she mumbled.

"Not quite. There's one last thing we need to do..."

She moved forwards, wrapping both sets of her arms around Florence's body, then adding her tendrils to the caress for good measure. Before Florence could return her embrace Isabella locked eyes with her, then swept her into a deep, passionate kiss.

Even with everything else that had just happened, that may have been the most electric part - the tension and release as their lips *finally* met. She melted into it, letting any nerves she'd built up in the past few minutes wash blissfully away.

Then, suddenly, she felt something else. There was a pull, a touch, a presence; sent somehow from Isabella and then answered distantly from somewhere within Florence herself. Her head twitched, and then with a feeling like a butterfly pulling wings free from its cocoon, she felt her slim metallic antenna unfold through her hair. With a tiny 'click' they made contact with Isabella's, and Florence felt one last powerful jolt run through her.

"Oh!", she gasped. "Oh my, th- that fee- that feels... wow, wow, that's a big feeling, huh?"

She could feel it now. It wasn't coming from Isabella, it's just that she was channelling it too - this energy, coming from... elsewhere, everywhere, this rush of life filtering down through all the machinery around and inside them, before it gathered and grew, pressing and growing inside her, so that she could share and give it back, letting her, making her need to-

Her legs splayed, her eyes rolling up in her head as her body pulsed, the energy pressing slowly through her ovipositor as her first egg landed slickly on the ground beneath her.

Isabella pulled backwards so that she could take it all in. "Subject integration complete", she said, beaming. "How do you feel?"

Florence answered with an eager grin of her own. "Like I'm a part of something", she said. "And whatever that something is exactly, I know that it's with you, so I'm happy."

"Awww", Isabella replied, her cheeks blushing green. "You adorable cornball."

They fell back into an embrace, holding and kissing each other for several long minutes until eventually Isabella broke the silence.

"So... you ready to see what fucking in these bodies is like?"

"Extremely affirmative", Florence answered quickly, taking her by the hand and pulling her eagerly down to the floor.