Lost in translation (a be-tentacled romance)

by Ravager_Zero

Summary

When a strange object falls from the sky, Vani Harrison goes to investigate, and what she finds will take more than a little getting used to.

(Very vaguely inspired by both Arrival and the Cthulhu Mythos; but mostly this is the the fault of /r/Consentacles. Thanks guys.)
Landfall

Several dozen feet in the air, above a bland field of dying grass, the sky shimmered and fractured in an iridescent rainbow, like shards of prismatic glass. Out of this fracture fell the thing. It had mind enough to know that it had made a minor miscalculation, and that it would need to adapt its current ogive transformation into a simple delta planform to sustain minimum damage. But not none. With the mental equivalent of a heavy sigh, the thing rippled, the pointed nose splaying out into rippling pseudopods and a quartet of powerful, spade-ended tentacles. The pseudopods sprawled sideways and muscular contractions raced down them, flattening its body. The tentacles then formed a rough canard. Its body now above any impact area, the thing relaxed, gliding as capably as was possible with its weight in the thin atmosphere.

The landing was hard, bruising most of its lower surface, contusions that would take precious time to heal, but it left little trace of its presence in the field. Pulling its bruised appendages inwards, the creature curled into a ball, and with an odd rippling of its skin, shot off towards the nearby scrub. Anything large enough to shelter in from the surprisingly hot sun. There it lay until nightfall, biding its time, able to tell night from day only by the gradual decrease in its surface temperature. The next phase of its task was now beginning, finding a suitable host or mate with acceptable genetic robustness to begin the conquest of this realm. All things considered, it was going well.

That was when one of the local creatures began sniffing around its tightly coiled base, a damp breathing organ nuzzling into it. A tongue spreading acidic saliva across its skin. The thing recoiled in disgust. The beast clamped its jaws around a pseudopod and bit down hard. The beast’s growl reverberated through the thing’s entire substance, momentarily freezing it. Then the thing lashed out with a tentacle, trying to dislodge the attacker. It worked. Slamming the other three tentacles down gave a sudden sharp relief of beast attacking it—long and narrow, with a rear pseudopod for balance, and four bone filled columns holding it up against gravity. The muzzle was the most shocking, triangular, and instead of a beak, it had rows of angular protrusions—teeth. The thing had not fought a boned, toothed beast for a long time.

Further away, blurred with distant interference patterns, was another creature, easily three times as large as the first, and with only two bone filled columns holding it against gravity. The dynamic stability of such a creature would be an incredible boon. Just as soon as the first one was killed. But the smaller beast had backed off, standing between the thing and the larger creature. As the thing moved, so did the beast, always angling to intercept any move towards the larger creature. Intriguing—the possibility that the larger creature controlled the smaller beast mentally could not be ignored. Which, unfortunately, meant killing the smaller beast might damage the linked mind.

Only after it had parsed all this data did the thing realise it had flattened out in its normal defensive posture, tentacles beating the ground to give it some semblance of vision. Its injured pseudopod had already been drawn back into its body, but blue-white blood dripped across the field. Well, half of its injured pseudopod, that other half dangled limply from the beast’s jaws. Regeneration would take a not inconsiderable amount of energy.

Looking down at the limp… thing… hanging from her dog’s mouth, Vani sighed. “Bossco, do you gotta try to eat everything we find out here?”

The german shepherd at her side barked and jogged around her ankles, almost tripping her.

“Y’know, you better hope whatever that is ain’t poisonous, ya dopey mutt.”
Bossco’s reply was to swallow the chunk of weird meat in a single bite.

“Well, I guess we’ll find out tomorrow, won’t we boy?” Bossco jumped at her side, nuzzling her waist. “Yeah, yeah. Down. I wanna find out what this thing actually is.”

Bossco stood back, growling softly as Vani strode forward to investigate the thing she’d seen falling in the afternoon on the far side of her land. It looked somewhat like an octopus, but with too many arms, and then some squid-like tentacles too, and it had blue blood. It couldn’t be any clearer if there was a flashing red sign on top of it saying ‘alien’. It was also hurt, thanks to Bossco, and had withdrawn at least one of its several too many arms into its main body. Vani knelt down to touch the thing. It was soft; it rippled like a waterbed when she touched it—it was also smooth. So smooth it felt wet, but her hands came away bone dry.

“What are you, little one?” She had no idea if it could even hear. It seemed to, though, rolling up into a tight ball. She tried picking it up. “Heavy is what you are. How the hell can you weigh that much?”

Giving the rolled up thing a hard shove, Vani managed to get it moving, Bossco trotting along next to her, occasionally darting forward to sniff suspiciously at the thing. It wasn’t too hard getting it back to the house—it seemed able to move somewhat under its own power, if slowly. It was hard to reconcile that with the graceful glider she’d seen in the early afternoon, popping into the clear blue sky right out of nowhere. And maybe just as well it had been her land; old Frank down the road was likely as not to have filled it with buckshot, and the Anderson kids... well. Vani shrugged. The thing rippled itself up the stairs onto the porch.

“Looks like you ain’t hurt too bad then,” Vani paused with the door open. “But I wouldn’t know the first thing abo—Bossco, get out of it!—about fixing you up. Like, do you eat? Drink? Can you even hear me? Understand what I’m saying? Hell, are you even smart enough not to let Bossco try an’ eat you again?”

The thing had no idea of what was being said, only a very slight vibration against the surface of its skin. Clearly the taller creature was the far more intelligent, and it seemed to be making repeated attempts at communication while guiding the thing around. Every so often the thing would slap down the broad end of a tentacle, building a vague picture of its current location. Built from some local fibro-cellulose based material, with the lower ground contact portion covered in hide and fur. So the taller creature had its own dwelling, with seemingly unique spaces within; another clear sign of intellect superior to that of the aggressive—and hungry—beast it seemed to control.

The creature was now carefully pressing against the thing’s flank, attempting—it assumed—to uncover the injured pseudopod. Slowly, carefully, the thing unrolled the injured pseudopod. That was when it felt the tentacles of the creature cradling it, pressing against it—somewhat painfully—and otherwise manipulating the broken appendage. The range of motion on those tentacles seemed sharply limited, and when it extended another pseudopod to investigate why, those tentacles stopped moving. The thing had a moment to consider whether it might have accidentally triggered a fear response before the tentacles began to manipulate the pseudopod, moving back and forth between it and the injured one.

Tactile comparative analysis. There was one more simple test, and so the thing held out a single tentacle, uncoiling it slowly so it could meet the tentacles of the other. The pads and suckers on the thing’s tentacle wrapped over the tentacles of the creature and suddenly it understood. Those tentacles had rigid bone supports, four seemed normal—as far as the creature’s range of motion was concerned—and one seemed specialised, being both smaller and mutually opposable to the others. The tips of those tentacles also seemed to have two surfaces—a fleshy lower plate, and a
hard, smooth, protective upper plate. A truly fascinating biomorphic design. It needed more data.

The thing slowly extended its remaining tentacles and pseudopods towards the tall creature, which right now was moving slowly away, and no longer touching it at all. The thing let its appendages fall limp. The tall creature stayed put. The thing extended a single tentacle towards it, sucker side up. The tall creature didn’t move forward, but the thing felt one of the creature’s tentacles stroke around its suckers. Success. It raised another tentacle. The creature met it with one of its own. A third tentacle, further away. The creature shuffled forward, one tentacle leaving the first the thing had raised and touching the newly raised tentacle. The thing lowered its first tentacle, pressing it gently against one of the flesh and bone columns supporting the tall creature, and felt an odd ripple pass through the creature’s flesh.

Vani stood stock still, her left hand pressing against the further tentacle of the thing, wishing it had eyes. She had just figured out that the only way for it to ‘see’ was to actually touch things—or do that odd ground thump every now and then. She couldn’t hide a vague sense of revulsion as two of those broad, strong tentacles explored her legs. She had no idea what it was that made it so unsettling, it just was. Then again, maybe it was the weird stickiness of the suckers alternating with the oily smoothness of its skin—but neither of those left a single trace on her own skin.

A firm slap pushed first one, then another tentacle away from the top of her thighs—and if they tried pushing any higher, well, she was in the kitchen. Putting that thought aside, Vani was glad she was wearing clothes, the tentacles seemingly able to make the distinction and stay on the outside of them. It was still uncomfortable though, as one wrapped her torso, making it hard to breathe, while another pressed experimentally into her left breast. With an annoyed huff she broke free, holding all four tentacles at arms length. The thing seemed to understand that there were places she didn’t want to be touched. Still, they needed a better method of communication than the purely tactile.

The thing didn’t have eyes, seemed to lack ears, and if it had a nose or a mouth she had yet to see any evidence of them. That was when the smaller tentacles started moving, twining up her legs. When they got high enough—where she’d slapped the larger ones away—they moved around the outside of her body, up her waist. More small tentacles joined them, spreading across her stomach and up her back, avoiding her breasts as they wrapped around her front and down her arms. They were loose enough that she could still move fairly freely. Then one wrapped around her neck. She clawed at it in sudden panic. If this thing was planning on eating her, she was going to put up a fight.

It wasn’t, but the tentacle remained around her neck, looser than before. More climbed the side of her head, covering her eyes and ears, tracing the loose tail of her hair. It truly did see by touch alone—and using so many little tentacles meant it was trying to get the best picture of her possible.

“You are a strange little thing, aren’t you?” The thing made no response, although the tentacle at her throat twitched when she spoke. “If you had eyes—or ears—it’d make this a whole lot easier.”

The thing withdrew all its pseudopods from the tall creature. A fascinating skeletal design, in theory terribly unstable and injury prone in such gravity, but in evident practice a graceful combination of dynamic stability and muscular robustness. It was also still trying to communicate. An experiment then. The thing spread out as many of its pseudopods as possible, flattening them out, raising them, and forming a parabola that centered on its main body.

“You look like a satellite dish buddy.” The sounds were not quite concise, the breaks uneven, but even so that thing knew that this would likely be the tall creature’s primary mode of communication. The only problem would be deciphering it. “Still wish you had eyes.” The
variation in pitch and tone suggested a different intent than the first string. There would be an easy way to work out what a negative communication felt/sounded like. The thing reached for the upper, protruding muscles on the creature’s upper body. One of the creature’s bony tentacles slapped it away, followed by a single, firm, sound/note. “No.”

The thing gently moved a tentacle towards the meeting point of the flesh and bone support columns. The same sound, but stronger. Definite negative note. Satisfied, the thing lay its tentacles against the floor. Figuring out an affirmative would be more difficult, as with only one mutually understandable statement little effective communication could be conducted. A vague idea forming, it held up the injured pseudopod separately.

“Does it hurt?” The tone was very different to any previous.

The thing held up an unhurt pseudopod. “What are you trying to do?” Another different tone/sequence. It held up a third pseudopod, then a tentacle. The third pseudopod pointed to each in turn, in slow sequence. The tall creature moved closer, touching each in turn as it spoke. “So this one is hurt? Okay, and this one is normal; right. And then this one, it’s not like one of those other ones. So, why?” If the thing had known what a facepalm was, it would have. There was such a thing as being too successful.

Vani looked at the thing—resembling nothing more than a satellite dish and a bunch of antennae right now—and knew it was trying to communicate with her. It was going to be difficult to establish a shared lexicon if all she could do was talk, and all it could was touch, and point—but if it could point, that meant it had some vague sense of vision. Maybe there was hope yet. Even just a name would be helpful—assuming it had a name. Pointing to herself, and feeling vaguely ridiculous, Vani spoke loud and clear. “Vani.”

Then she pointed to the thing. “You?”

No response.

“Yeah, I should’ve expected that. You only understand ‘no’ right now. Kinda like Bosco as a puppy, really.”

The thing couldn’t parse what was being said any better than before, though it had at least managed to establish that the creature it was attempting to communicate with used the self-designation ‘Vani’. A possibly meaningless noise, but the creature had been purposefully indicating itself while speaking the word. Then it had pointed at the thing—and asked what it called itself. The thing trembled with excitement. That meant the Vani-creature was both self-aware—the most definite sign of true intelligence—and had a theory of mind, asking how another saw itself. This left the problem of the thing not having an individual self-identifying label. It held up its tentacles letting them wave idly while it thought on the matter.

“‘course, I could always just call you Tentacles, on account of you’re made of ‘em.” There was a pause as the Vani-creature thought over the statement. “Tentacles.” A significant pause. “Yeah, I think Tentacles sounds right.”

The thing parsed that sound carefully, if the tall creature was to respond to the sound ‘Vani’, then it expected the thing to respond to ‘Tentacles’. It was better than nothing, and as the thing had started with nothing, it had no complaints. Perhaps it was lucky and the name was descriptive.
First Night

Vani sighed, looking down at Tentacles, long having given up on even attempting to classify the thing. As far as she could tell it had four large tentacles, twelve smaller tentacles, and a bulbous—almost spherical—central body. It also lacked eyes and ears, though it seemed capable of listening when it did the dish thing with its smaller tentacles. It couldn’t speak, and so far understood perhaps three words—it’s ‘name’, her name, and ‘no’. Once again it came back to the only sense they shared—touch. How could touch be turned into a language?

There were other, pressing, questions nagging at the back of her mind. What did it eat? How? Did it need to drink? Was it aquatic, and thus needed to return to the water at some point? It was definitely alien though. Maybe not from space, but from somewhere else for sure. Which led to more questions. Why was it here? Had it got lost? Been exiled? Suffered some kind of accident? What plans did it have? Did she need to inform some authority she was keeping a weird tentacled thing in her house? Only if she wanted to be locked up and sent to the loony bin. There were still other methods of communication to try. It seemed to have a highly developed tactile sense, after all.

Feeling somewhat foolish, Vani wandered through the house, collecting an old box of crayons and a few sheets of paper from the printer. Maybe if she tried treating it like a three year old they could make some progress. She tore the paper into smaller sections, drawing basic shapes on each. Circle, square, triangle, cross. Tearing up another sheet, she repeated the process. Then she placed the circle in front of Tentacles, and guided one of the smaller tentacles towards it.

The thing—Tentacles—felt Vani guiding its pseudopod towards the ground. Not quite the ground—there was a thin material between its pseudopod and the fibre-cellulose layer. Two edges were smooth and regular, two were rough, with many very fine protruding fibres. On top of the thin sheet there were two textures, the slight roughness of the material, and then a waxy smoothness. Tentacles extended several more of its pseudopods to investigate, tracing the outline of the wax very carefully.

Then Vani took the sheet away and replaced it with another. The rough edges were different, aligned strangely, but simple spatial reasoning told Tentacles that this was simply another translation of the first sheet. The symbol on top, however, was different. No longer a single outline traced in wax. This one terminated at three sharp points, with unnaturally straight sides. Yes, it was different—but why? What did Vani hope to achieve by showing it different symbols. A third symbol was presented to it. Straight edged again, with four sharp points. A fourth symbol. Two straight edges that met in the middle.

Then Vani presented it with two symbols, and Tentacles understood—Vani was trying to establish if it had pattern recognition. Pseudopods raced out and traced the symbols. Both matched the second symbol—straight lines with three sharp points. Tentacles lifted the sheets and placed them together. Two more sheets. The first and fourth symbols. Tentacles pushed them away. Third and fourth. Away. Fourth and second. Tentacles thought for a moment, tracing them carefully, then pushed them away again. First and first. Tentacles placed the sheets together. This was now very promising, Vani was attempting new methods of communication.

Then Tentacles had an idea. With one pseudopod touching the sheets of the second symbol it extended a second pseudopod vertically, attempting to kink it to match the sharp angles of the symbol. A sudden slight pressure wave from Vani’s direction washed over its being, a strange yet pleasant sensation. Using its pseudopods, Tentacles began to mimic the other symbols. The first
was the easiest, the last—the meeting lines—required two pseudopods to form correctly. A ripple of light pressure waves came from Vani, then speech. Tentacles expanded its improvised tympanic system as Vani took hold of one of its major tentacles.

Guiding the tentacle to the musculature on Vani’s upper body—the part that had previously drawn the negative association—Vani spoke, and used a free hand to press the two line symbol into Tentacles. It suddenly understood the meaning of the symbols—a form for mutual communication. Four symbols would be far better than one. It filed the two lines meeting symbol as a negative response, then waited patiently for Vani to perform another action. Moving the tentacle lower, around the midsection, Vani spoke a different word, firmly, clearly, and handed Tentacles the first symbol—the single, continuous line. An affirmative response. Tentacles practised making the symbols several times, as rapidly as it could.

Vani smiled, placing the heavier tentacle on the floor. Yes/no was the beginning of language; a mutual understanding could be established, and further communication would develop from that. Then she realised that she couldn’t just ask Tentacles to form the dish thing. Kneeling down next to the thing, she began toying with its smaller tentacles, trying to pull them out like the thing had done before, and after a few false starts she was staring at the dish again.

“Can you hear me?”

Circle. Yes. Though it probably didn’t understand the meaning of those words. Vani sat next to it, on the floor. She pointed to herself.

“Vani.”

Yes.

She pointed to Tentacles. “Vani?”

Crossed tentacles. No.

She kept pointing at Tentacles. “Tentacles?”

Yes.

She pointed at herself again. “Tentacles?”

No.

At least it could recognise names—or whatever passed for names in its language. It could also establish and recognise patterns. She laid the papers on the floor. “Vani or Tentacles?”

A long pause, with several smaller tentacles shuffling the papers. No. Yes. Both. All four symbols.

Vani sighed, giving the thing a gentle pat. “We’ll get there buddy, somehow.”

Rising slowly, Vani walked to the sink and grabbed a glass of water, draining it without taking a breath. Then she grabbed a bowl from the other cupboard and drew some water into it, placing it on the floor in front of Tentacles. One smaller tentacle wormed around the bowl, gripping it loosely, water sloshing from side to side and over the floor. Then a second smaller tentacle joined the first, dipping below the surface. The water vanished in a split second. Vani grabbed the bowl
and refilled it, placing it down once again. The water drained more slowly this time. Tentacles lifted the bowl, presenting it to her. She had a feeling the bowl wouldn’t be enough.

“Stay there, I’ll get you something.”

She was back moments later with an old laundry bucket, and half-filled it with water. Once again Tentacles felt around the new object before sending its tentacles down into the water. It drank thirstily, but didn’t empty the bucket. Maybe it was semi-aquatic after all. Knowing it could drink water was one thing—how was another. What it might be able to eat was the third important unknown. While being wrapped in oily tentacles had been frightening, Vani realised that trying to eat her would have been… ambitious… for the thing. She couldn’t even see a mouth, after all. Still, there were a few things in the fridge, and it probably wouldn’t hurt to try some of them.

Tentacles waited patiently as Vani set yet more containers down on the ground. Exploratory probing showed that none of these contained significant amounts of liquid, though some did have a higher than usual moisture content. Three of the five items were well below the current atmospheric temperature, implying Vani had either control over local atmospheric effects—unlikely, though possible—or that Vani used technology of some sort to temporarily reduce the temperature of them items. As its pseudopods felt around the inside of the containers, Tentacles marvelled at the variety of textures, substances, and acidity levels. If this was what Vani could safely ingest then it had a remarkably robust digestive system.

Drawing closer to each of the containers in turn, Tentacles unfurled its main body, allowing its beak to protrude into the first of the containers. Bland, chewy. Another, warmer, rich in fibre compounds and interesting protein matrices. The third tasted of home—a place lost long ago, beyond the deluge—fleshy, with a hint of salt, made of muscle fibres and scaly skin. It knew the taste well, but this had other notes, and had somehow altered the structure without damaging the flavour excessively. Tentacles pulled the container with that food closer, attempting to hide it under a fold of rubbery skin. Vani took it back and placed it in line with the others. With the mental equivalent of a shrug, Tentacles moved onto the next two containers. Another fleshy, yet crisp and moist meal. Strange, but appetising. The fifth container held a strange liquid, with chunks of flesh and soft, fibrous strands.

Vani pushed the first container towards it. “Tofu.” Tentacles tried another bite, but found it too bland to be appetising.

The second container was proffered as the first was pulled away. “Muesli.” The flakes had a satisfying crunch, and the small pellets were rich in protein chains and several compounds useful for regeneration.

The third container was pushed forward. “Fish.” Tentacles restrained itself to taking a single bite, knowing that Vani was trying to both educate it, and establish what it could safely eat—and whether it might have any preference.

“Apple.” That was the fourth container.

“Beef stew, with noodles.” Number five.

Tentacles waited several moments as Vani rested on the floor, her support columns crossed beneath her main body. Such an interesting amount of flexibility for a bone-filled creature. Vani made no moves, so Tentacles retrieved the third and fourth containers—Fish, and Apple. The fish was almost like a drug, taking Tentacles back to a piece of racial memory not felt for many, many generations. The apple was something new, clearly a kind of fruit, native to this realm. It also
Regeneration also required a period of enforced somnolence. Vani had been more than helpful, and Tentacles considered its current location safe enough—provided Vani’s beast/companion did not attempt to eat it again. Tentacles began preparing for the regeneration, spreading its pseudopods and tentacles out in a spiral, curling back to almost touch its main body. It felt Vani’s gentle caress as its sensory capacity fell below conscious levels. Then it slept.

“Sleep then, little one.” Vani patted Tentacles one more time, still surprised her hand came away dry, then headed upstairs to her own bed. It had been a most… intriguing night. It also reminded her that out here in the country she was far lonelier than she had been while studying in the city. It meant friends with benefits were harder to come by. Most of the other people nearby were fairly conservative, if fond of government related conspiracy theories. But Vani preferred the country, the wide open space, the stars at night, the quiet. She could be as loud as she wanted, and nobody would care.

Throwing off her shirt, Vani worried at the scar halfway down her left side. It still itched, but it had healed fine, just a fine white line of slightly raised flesh. Another matched it, lower, on her back. An unsupported load—a piece of rebar—had flown off the back of a truck and punched through her windscreen, lung, driver’s seat, and the firewall at the back of the car. It had been the most legitimately terrifying moment of her life, and a large part of what had prompted her to move back out here after finishing her studies.

She had kept more than a few souvenirs from the city however, most of them more adult in nature. Some of her favourite things, in actual fact. The question was which one to play with tonight. Or two. Or maybe even three. It had been a long time since she’d fucked anyone. One hand was already past the waist of her jeans, feeling at the soft tangle of hairs above her entrance. She practically tore the jeans off, throwing them across the room. Her hand ground at her pelvis through the fabric of her briefs. She threw herself backwards onto the bed. Tonight was going to be a good one, followed by a hella steamy shower if she could stay awake long enough.

The fingers of her left hand traced the line of her labia through the fabric of her briefs, playfully pinching at a few special points. Her right hand scrambled around in the top drawer of her nightstand, feeling for the right selection of toys. Yes. Yes. No, too hard. No, too soft. Oh, the other lube—Aha, gotcha. Vani placed the toys on top of the nightstand, both hands now rubbing up and down the length of her entrance, the cloth of her briefs more tormenting than tantalising now. Vani slid her briefs down, her right hand teasing left and right of her entrance while her left hand pressed gently at the tiny hood above. A shake of her legs threw the briefs half off, and that would have to do.

With a sigh of relief Vani ran the medium dildo up and down the length of her labia before driving it in full force. The sudden eruption of sensation took her breath away. Always—always when she did it that way. Her breath came in short, sharp gasps. She could feel it filling her, but as she tried to push it deeper there was resistance—the moulded balls stopped it cold. The resistance, the delicious frustration, the sense of being not quite filled—that was what she craved, and what drove her to find new ways to deepen her pleasure. But one little thrust couldn’t hurt. Or another. Or—Vani caught herself, ramming the dildo back in with a quiet gasp. She had many more ways to get pleasure tonight.

The nipple clamps, for example, held with a fine steel chain. The pinch, just on that weird border between intense pleasure and pain. She shivered from head to toe, one hand keeping the dildo firmly inside her. There was another dildo, shorter, slimmer—she preferred it for other things, coating it in gel lube and giving the dildo already inside her a few good thrusts. Vani toyed with
the second dildo for a little while, pressing it gently around her ass, sliding the lubed head just inside. She had to be more careful with this hole, take things slowly, gently, to get the most out of it. But inside she could almost feel both dildos rubbing together.

Unfortunately, holding two dildos in—and thrusting with them—left her a hand short of being able to play with her clit at the same time. Her breath now ragged and uneven with spikes of pleasure, Vani abandoned one of the dildos long enough to take the clamp from her left nipple. She sucked in a sharp breath as she attached the clamp over her clit. It was too much to take, and so she clamped her nipple again. Sometimes she could do that, just not tonight. Instead, her hands began a rhythmic thrusting. Top. Bottom. Top. top, bottom, top. Bottom, top, top. Together. Top. It was getting hard to hold it together, her body shuddering in delight, but still she wasn’t quite there.

Thrusting hard with the larger dildo, her pussy used to the size now, Vani arched her back and clenched her thighs. So close… she felt so damn close. She could feel it building deep inside her, a sensation of joy and utter satiation spreading from just below her stomach. A long, slow thrust with the dildo in her ass. The feeling of completion; of being filled past her bursting point. Two sharp thrusts grinding hard into her labia, trying to press the dildo against her clit. A single spark to bridge the gap between action and feeling. Her whole body tensed, her ass clenching the smaller dildo. She tried in vain to take another breath.

The quiver rippled from her scalp to her toes in an instant, and a great sense of relief flowed through her body. Tensed muscles relaxed, and she fell back on the sheets, panting heavily with exertion. With some reluctance she pulled out the dildos, wishing she could simply enjoy such a languorous moment—but if she didn’t move soon, the whole bed would be the wet spot. Moving slowly, deliberately, on slightly shaky legs, Vani grabbed her toys and made her way to the bathroom. Cleaning afterwards was such a chore.

That left the shower—hot and steamy—and idle hands with which to play. She tried, but it was still a little too sensitive from before. It didn’t quite hurt, but it wasn’t comfortable either. An overload of sensation. More would have to wait.
It only occurred to Vani, after waking up, that Tentacles had some limited facility for vision. It had, after all, known whether she was pointing at it, or herself. It had also been able to wallop Bossco, and was able to avoid her as she walked around. Its larger tentacles would occasionally beat against the floor. *Is it some kind of echolocation?* She couldn’t be sure, but it was a decent hypothesis. First up, however, she would have to feed Bossco—assuming he hadn’t keeled over from trying to eat part of Tentacles the previous night.

Not even bothering with clothes, Vani padded down the stairs, stepping past Tentacles in the kitchen to get Bossco’s food. The morning air was crisp, not quite cold. Vani felt it raise goosebumps up and down her arms and legs, and everything between. A delightful shiver raced up her spine. One hand pressed between her legs while the other opened the cupboards. She wanted to, one finger sliding slowly, tantalisingly up her entrance and towards her stomach. So badly—but now was not the time. Not with Bossco to feed and Tentacles to try and communicate with. A frustrated huff escaped her lips as she scooped some meat into a dish for Bossco.

Her faithful companion was sitting at the back door, looking expectantly up at her. Nothing seemed wrong with him, none-the-worse for wear after eating a weird alien tentacle the previous night. She set the dish down, the meat vanishing in about two seconds. Vani gave him an admonishing look. Bossco just wagged his tail.

“You don’t even taste it.”

Bossco just sat, wagging his tail, trying to look pathetic. He rolled over, looking up expectantly.

“Oh, okay, I’ll give you the bellyrubs. Oh yes, you like the bellyrubs don’t you, don’t you?”

Bossco woofed playfully, his back leg frantically scratching the air. Vani patted him twice on the stomach. “Okay you, get lost. You’ve got the whole place to yourself.”

So of course he sat next to the door, lazing in the low morning sun. Vani stood and stretched, yawning widely. Naked under the sun—not something she could do too often when she’d lived in the city. She revelled in the freedom this place gave her. Turning to go back inside, her mind turned to the problem of communicating with Tentacles. They still only had yes, no, and two unused symbols. It was also probably a good idea to get a bra and briefs while training Tentacles, because well… Vani frowned, turning the odd lack of disquiet around in her head. Surely it had to just be horniness carrying over from last night. It wasn’t like Tentacles had anything even vaguely approaching a penis anyway.

At least, not that she knew of.

Vani cursed, scrambling up the stairs. But as she dressed it wasn’t her willingness to experiment that sat foremost in her mind; no, it was the yes/no duality. Something about it was percolating in the back of her mind. Something about language. Something that could be used with pretty much any sense, if she put enough thought into it. It was driving her mad as she prepared breakfast, placing an apple next to Tentacles. It had seemed to quite enjoy the apple last night.

“Damn it!” Vani cursed, throwing the wrapper from her muesli bar in the bin. The language idea was driving her mad.

*Wait, why was the bin important?*
It took a few moments before it clicked.

_Goddamn. Binary. Off and On; True and False; Yes and No. The simplest fucking language there is._ Unfortunately, that still left how to gain a mutual understanding somewhat hazy. How did you teach words to something that couldn’t speak or hear? Would it even know what words were? Once again Vani hurried upstairs, grabbing her laptop, and an assortment of random items from around her room. And tape. Masking tape.

It took some time, but eventually she laid out a simple grid, eight by seventeen. Then she set to work on the laptop, looking up binary tables. Probably best to start with simple math. She hoped Tentacles wouldn’t find it condescending. She set to creating the first sequence, using taller blocks and objects for 1’s, and shorter things for 0’s.

As Tentacles awoke it beat its larger tentacles against the ground, rapidly building up a picture of its immediate surroundings. It recalled safety and contentment, along with confusion before it had undergone the necessary somnolence for regeneration. Immediately in front of it was a small, irregular orb. The surface was smooth, and firm. Slowly it drew the object to its beak, tasting it, memory recall informing it that this was, indeed, an apple, as Vani had given it last night. Vani merely neglected the container this time. Further, in the next major area of the dwelling, sat Vani, a hard, bent object of metal in front of her. Vani’s lower support columns were folded beneath the lower body, while the bony tentacles raced across the surface of the object in front of Vani. Between them was minor discontinuity, and with the help of several pseudopods, Tentacles surmised that an array had been added to the ground, some thin substance forming the third symbol from the previous night.

But the symbol was wrong, the lines overlapping the vertices—and something lay within most of the symbols of the array. Tentacles felt around the symbols, the size of the array, and understanding began to dawn. Vani was seeking more pattern matching—testing for intelligence, which was a clear sign of Vani’s intelligence. After assessing the possible patterns, and the strange objects used to create them, Tentacles began rearranging pairs to match. Two of its pseudopods were suddenly gripped by Vani’s. It heard the negative response, and withdrew its pseudopods, confused. Vani re-set the patterns.

Walking along the patterns, Vani made a noise, slightly different for each, stopping at the tenth. Vani then repeated the sequence, and drew several pseudopods over to study it. Tentacles was now beginning to understand, as each time it indicated a particular row of symbols in the array, Vani made the corresponding sound—only then came the flash of insight about the connection of the symbols and the objects. Vani had _improvised_ a solution that both allowed Vani to see and Tentacles to feel the language being used, and it was so _simple._

Vani was trying to teach it binary notation. Tentacles felt its body rippling with laughter at the thought. For all the great advances its species had made, in memory, art, conquest, and transcendence, it was stuck here trying to communicate with this strange visual being using binary. On the evidence to hand—and from the previous night—Vani could only be a visually oriented being; nothing else could explain both its navigational accuracy and difficulty at tactile/chemical communication—especially given the clear level of displayed intelligence.

Moreover, should Vani be teaching binary, then this array would have to correlate to mathematical symbols. But should Vani leave those rows past ten empty? Slowly, carefully, Tentacles wrapped its pseudopods around Vani’s smaller, bony, tentacles. Vani had ten of them, and had a further ten—shorter and stubbier—on the pads at the bottom of its support columns, though none of those were apparently opposable. The physical format of Vani’s body was incredibly intriguing for a
creature living on a world with this gravity, something inherently unstable and prone to damage, and yet incredibly agile and dextrous because of it. Any offspring from this pairing would be an incredibly potent force in the future.

Returning to the task at hand, Tentacles quickly memorised each sequence of code, then raised eight of its pseudopods, ready to show that it had learned these numbers and that Vani could advance through more complex topics. Tentacles began to repeat the sequences by raising and lowering the appropriate pseudopods, hopefully moving slowly enough that Vani could track and follow it. Then, with deliberate intent, it began performing basic mathematical operations—despite not knowing the binary combinations for the operators. After a handful of repetitions Vani seemed to understand, replicating the patterns in the array on the ground, replacing the blank with the operator sequence. Tentacles was suddenly thankful that Vani was such an intelligent specimen—but knew no way of showing it that Vani was likely to understand.

Vani frowned, after going through basic math, Tentacles was approaching her, the rubbery mass of its body pressing against her calves. Two of the smaller tentacles wound up her left leg, wrapping around her stomach with a gentle squeeze before Tentacles drew back and resumed its place next to the grid. Had it just tried to thank her? Walking over to where it sat, Vani gently pulled on the small tentacles, wrapping them around her in roughly the same way at the same time. Tentacles began to form the dish.

“Thank you,” Vani found her voice softer than normal.

Then she cleared the junk from the floor and looked up the binary table, setting it up as quickly as possible to spell out what she’d just said. Of course, Tentacles might just think it was more math, but as she watched it studying the sequence she became more and more convinced that it knew it wasn’t just another set of numbers. Then it did something strange. It flashed the circle symbol with one small tentacle, and the binary for ‘1’ with the rest of them; then it flashed the square, and the message she had just written. The implication struck her like a thunderbolt. *It wants to know if I understood.*

“I understand,” and she changed the grid to read that, prefacing it with a square.

Grabbing three apples, Vani placed one at the top of the grid, and the other about halfway down. Then she filled the grid, prefacing numbers and letters with circles and squares. 1 Apple. 2 Apple. She extended the grid with some more tape, and placed six apples at the bottom of the grid. Then she watched in fascination as Tentacles set to work, all twelve of the smaller tentacles reading the grid and position blocks and objects, while the four largest tentacles—those with rings of suckers on them—began to manipulate the apples.

3 Apple.

2 Apple + 1 Apple = 3 Apple.

5 Apple x 2 Apple = 20 Apple.

4 Apple ÷ 2 Apple = 1 Apple.

1 Apple ÷ 2 Apple = 0.5 Apple. Vani smiled, gently moving blocks aside to insert the code for a decimal point. Tentacles held up its smaller tentacles, quickly signing thank you. Vani clapped for it, stepping back, trying to figure out how best to expand their respective vocabularies—and how she could best learn to read binary faster. It was Tentacles that came up with the solution to the former, placing its beak next to an apple, writing apple in the grid, then leaving another tentacle...
pointing at the next blank space. Vani filled in the blanks, spelling out ‘Hungry’. When Tentacles began to eat the apple she changed it to ‘Eat’.

There had to be a better way to communicate—Tentacles was flashing binary so fast it was hard to read individual letters. Of course, Tentacles had replicated the symbols from the previous night, so letters might be possible—if it knew what they meant. She cleared the grid, expanding it even further—26 letters. Then she added a ninth block to each, grabbing crayons and paper again, drawing large block capitals on each.

Tentacles was intrigued by the sudden rush of activity, Vani now doing something with flat sheets similar to the previous time. Vani had cleared the array, expanding it in both horizontal directions, a ninth block spaced slightly apart from the first eight, and an extension out to 26 rows. Then a flat sheet went in the first space of the ninth column, and Tentacles sent out three pseudopods to investigate, feeling the familiar waxy surface. It was similar to the second symbol from before—but the angle was sharper, and the baseline about a third of the way up. The second row’s symbol was a combination, a vertical line, and attached to that two halves of the first symbol from the previous time. The third row was an incomplete version of the affirmation/positive symbol.

It understood now. Vani was showing it both binary, and corresponding non-number symbols—the sounds Vani made for each nowhere near those made while counting—which meant that Vani’s species used a phonemic glyphic language for communication. More pseudopods crept out, scanning each of the glyphs in exquisite detail. Most would be fairly easy to replicate, though it knew it would be limited to displaying a maximum of twelve at any one time. Even the simple Apple Hungry combination would press it dangerously close to its limit, but it least it was sure Vani knew how to construct sentences and combine language structurally to obtain specific meaning.

Tentacles used one of its actual tentacles to take one of the wax rods Vani used to mark the sheets, then took one of those sheets for good measure. Vani understood mimicry—so it should also understand seeing its designation in glyphic form. Tentacles set to work, one tentacle drawing the glyphs—rather haphazardly—with two pseudopods tracking the shapes and trail the wax rod was leaving on the sheet. It held up its work.

VANE

Vani laughed. Tentacles was confused. Vani took another sheet, then copied the glyphs—modifying the last one.

VANI

Frustration coursed through its body, making its pseudopods waver in their tasks. The glyphs could stand for more than one phoneme, making this form of communication even more difficult—if only it could show Vani its language of chemicals and pheromones, the subtlety of textures and what they meant. It just had no way of knowing if Vani had the capacity to understand chemical memory. It could only try. Opening the tripartite flap at the tip of a single pseudopod, Tentacles forced through a simple memory & test combination, dribbling it onto one of the flat sheets, then it held up its pseudopods to spell VANI EAT.

Vani swallowed, suddenly unsure of herself. Was Tentacles trying to feed her? Had it just dumped something on that paper? Was it some weird alien sex ritual? She gave the substance an experimental sniff. Vanilla, and something otherworldly, with hints of pine and tree sap. It was thick, like custard. She picked up the paper dubiously—but it seemed unlikely to be poison, given how Bossco had eaten some of Tentacles last night and hadn’t been harmed—and after a moment,
tipped the sludge back down her throat. It tasted of salt and oil, and as it went down she suddenly felt light-headed and like her body didn’t have nearly enough limbs. The feeling passed and she sat up again. Tentacles was holding up the four symbols from the previous night. She touched the two it had used for confusion.

Thank you. No. Minus.

Vani blinked. What was it trying to say? What had it tried to do?

“It’s okay,” Vani stroked its main body. “I guess something didn’t work.” Had it been trying to apologise for something failing? She wrote the words on another piece of paper, following them with ‘sorry’. She still wondered about why whatever it was Tentacles had fed her had caused her to think her body was wrong, and small, and had too few limbs. That would require a much deeper understanding of language.

Their experiments and attempts at mutual communication continued for much of the day, ending only when Vani was too tired to continue. As she made her way up the stairs Tentacles began to follow her, sliding into her room behind her. She was just too tired to say no—trying to communicate, and actually having it work, though exciting, was incredibly tiring. All she did was push various tentacles away as she undressed, climbing wearily into bed. Tentacles signed for her, staying on the floor.

Vani must sleep?

“Yeah, I’m tired.”

Vani confused.

“No, tired. I have to sleep.”

Yes. Vani sleep. Tentacles wake. Talk when Vani wake.

“No touch while sleep.”

Understand.
So, there would be at least one downside to breeding with Vani, but for Tentacles that wasn’t going to dissuade it from implementing its plan to enhance its offsprings’ genome with Vani’s. Certainly the requirement for somnolence with respect to the cycle of the planet about its axis was annoying, but the advantages seemed to far outweigh the drawbacks. The biggest advantage being Vani’s ability to see—though Tentacles had yet to truly test it, the simple questions it had managed told it much. At close distances Vani could easily distinguish each pseudopod—more than that, Vani could identify the tripartite flap that closed the tip of each pseudopod.

As for the resolution in time of Vani’s visual sense, Tentacles hadn’t yet managed to make a sequence of glyphs that was unable to be understood in more than two attempts. The implications for parallel cognitive processing were immense, especially if that region of the psyche were co-opted for something other than visual processing. Just another piece of gene coding it could load into the first egg for Vani. Assuming first that Vani would be willing to breed with it; and second that both Vani and the egg would remain unharmed by the breeding and birthing process. It would do no good to have the breeder die before any offspring entered adulthood.

Lowering a significant portion of its mind into somnolence allowed Tentacles to pass the time without thought while remaining alert to changes or dangers. It also allowed for greater mental capacity to be devoted to subconscious processing and intuitive construction. Vani wasn’t the only being it had encountered capable of improvisation, though Vani was one of the most versatile. Tentacles’s thoughts returned to itself, collating and extrapolating all it had learned so far of Vani’s language glyphs and phonemes. It wondered if there was a way to convert one to the other via some technological solution.

The folding steel case Vani had been attending to during the language lessons.

Tentacles flicked its pseudopods in frustration. Using the case required visual senses—more than just echolocation—as Vani had quite often kept her visual organs fixed on the flat, featureless upper section of the device. The lower section had been textured with semi-uniform squares that served as inputs. There were also the wax rods Vani had used—and allowed it to use—the previous day cycle. It also wished it could touch Vani while she slept—Vani had removed the small cloth covering the ‘no’ places before climbing onto the sleeping platform, and Tentacles wanted to know why such places were so important. Or perhaps they were more sensitive? That was one reason they might be covered.

Marking the rising of the single local star, Tentacles had pinpointed the planet’s day/night cycle to within a second. Whether axial tilt and orbital eccentricity came into play would be questions for later—especially if there were extremes of either that might pose a risk to Vani—or even itself. Such places did exist, after all, and in shifting planes it was hard to pinpoint exactly where it might land. Growing restless, Tentacles slid around Vani’s personal area in the dwelling, enjoying the strange texture of fluffy hoops against its underside. The next area was once again smooth, and a sudden shock transmitted through the ground told it Vani had awakened.

Vani stood, stretching, catching a glimpse of Tentacles over her shoulder. She padded over to the bathroom, shooing Tentacles out while she relieved herself. The thing was waiting behind the door when she opened it again.

Hello Vani. Language onwards?
“Morning Tentacles. Lemme get something to eat first.”

Eat hungry? Tentacles eat also?

“Yeah, I’ll see what I’ve got. Gotta feed Bosco too.”

What Bosko?

“My dog. He tried to eat you.”

Bosko friend animal. Understand. Bosko need eat and sleep?

“Yeah,” Vani frowned. “I’m guessing you don’t normally sleep?”

Tentacles only sleep to repair.

“Huh, well. You are a weird little monster.”

Rummaging through the cupboards, Vani poured a bowl of cereal, then went outside and filled Bosco’s dish with his favourite biscuits. She hadn’t bothered getting dressed, despite Tentacles’s closeness and weirdness. She wasn’t just testing herself though—she was testing to see how Tentacles would react, to see if it could resist the temptation to touch everything. She peeled an orange for it, and as Tentacles ate it wrapped one of its smaller tentacles loosely around her ankle. It was almost like it was trying to show affection.

After breakfast the language lessons continued, Tentacles's grasp of English was very patchy, but its understanding of advanced concepts was sometimes beyond Vani’s comprehension. Clearly it was intelligent—ferociously so—and the only thing holding it back was the language barrier. It was also starting to ask more complex questions. Where the Earth was, for example. Axial tilt effects—seasons. Climate extremes. She wished she could just hand the thing a bloody encyclopaedia, but it couldn’t read. Or can it?

Vani strode over to the bookshelf, taking down a simple science book. She opened it at random and placed it in front of Tentacles. It placed several smaller tentacles on the pages, then held up several others in confusion.

“It’s a book,” Vani explained. “You read it to get information. Data.”

Read?

“Look at words and pictures, understand what they say.”


So apparently Tentacles's remarkable sense of touch had a resolution limit. Could it be the material? Vani frowned at the thought, grabbing the crayons and paper again, writing as small as possible, trying to copy the format exactly. She handed the sheet to Tentacles.

Information same?

“As the book, yes.”

“Huh, okay. I guess we gotta find another way to teach you then.”

Vani share learning with chemicals?

“What?”


“Wait…” something was congealing at the back of her mind. Vani recalled the weird sensation after eating Tentacle’s secretion the previous day. “Is that what you did yesterday?”

Yes. Testing if Vani could chemical-learn. Unknown if Vani could chemical-teach.

Holy. Shit. Vani rocked back, shocked. Tentacles was even more alien than she’d thought. If she understood what it was trying to say correctly, it used chemical memory to communicate, and store data, allowing it to trade learning and experiences directly with others of its own species. That meant the flash of wrongness the previous day had actually been a foreign memory—more a sensation—that was the closest her body could come to interpreting Tentacles’s memories. It was also, she realised, a potential form of mental influence—though she had no way to tell if she already had been by that single dose. A disturbing thought.

“How can tentacles control Vani’s mind?”

No. No. Tentacles can only control own mind.

“What about influence—altering a mind?”

Influence possible. Tentacles did not influence Vani. Tentacles only test whether Vani can chemical-learn.

“How can Tentacles influence Vani’s mind?”

Possible. Uncertain. Vani scared mental strong damaged?

Vani sat silent for a moment, thinking. While the translation was admittedly terrible, Tentacles at least understood enough to know that she was worried about being influenced by it, which in turn implied that Tentacles saw this teaching as important, and something that it didn’t want to compromise. She took a deep breath before replying.

“Yes. Vani scared mind influenced.”

Tentacles not use influence chemicals. Not sure how explain safely.

“You can’t,” Vani shook her head. “I just have to trust you.”

Trust?

“Accept that you are telling the truth. Accept that you have good intentions.”

Intention is to eventually breed. Is this good intention?
“Breed?” Vani cocked her head, looking at Tentacles strangely. “There are others of your kind here?”

No. Tentacles would like to breed with Vani.

Vani laughed. The honesty was disarming. It seemed impossible, but maybe it didn’t know that. “Is it even possible?”

Can Vani carry hatched offspring?

“You mean can I have a baby?”

Offspring, yes.

“Yes.”

Tentacles can breed with Vani. Vani must accept first. No breeding if Vani not accept.

Vani lay back against the floor, eyes closed. It was easier to think this way. She felt tentacles gently coiling around her wrists and ankles, and another pressing against her stomach. Another pressed gently between her breasts. Yet another caught her breath. She opened her eyes to stare at Tentacles.

Is Vani okay?

“I… I need time to process,” Vani gently moved the smaller tentacles away from her face and midsection, then uncoiled each from her arms. “Do you need to touch me?”

Touch comforts Tentacles. Does touch comfort Vani?

“Sometimes.” She closed her eyes. “Touch only yes places.”

Tentacles understood, sliding to nestle itself between Vani’s knees. Pseudopods gently began to coil around Vani’s toes, down her feet, and up around her ankles, all the way to her knees. Another pair twined the opposite way, moving around Vani’s thighs, working down towards her knees. By necessity they came close to the lower ‘no’ region of Vani’s body, but all she did was tense as they passed. Four more pseudopods wove around Vani’s abdomen, gently pressing against her stomach and below her breasts—what she had called the upper ‘no’ region. Two more pseudopods snaked out, wrapping Vani’s arms from the shoulders down to the elbows, then a straight line into the palm of each hand. Vani’s fingers gently curled around the tips of those pseudopods. The final two pseudopods wrapped themselves very loosely around Vani’s neck, feeling the sudden tension and release as she breathed out sharply. Her breath soon slowed, not to sleeping rate, but to something more relaxed.

With its actual tentacles, Tentacles reached for the wax rods and sheets that Vani used to communicate. It drew the yes symbol on one, and the no symbol on the other. Two tentacles held the symbols, leaving the other two to explore. But Vani always said no. One of the free tentacles brushed Vani’s forehead, the two holding the symbols either side of her face. The last free tentacle pressed softly between her breasts, where it could feel an increasing rhythm from her heart. Vani blinked, taking a breath.

Nothing happened.
Tentacles slowly moved the tentacles holding the symbols. Vani looked slowly towards the yes symbol. She was okay—or at least assented to the situation. One free tentacle moved to hover over Vani’s left breast. She remained looking at the yes symbol. The tentacle came down, a handful of suckers contacting Vani’s supple flesh. She turned slowly to face the no symbol. The tentacle was removed. She turned to face upwards, neither yes or no. A tentacle descended on her nose, a single sucker pressing against the tip. Vani turned slowly towards the yes symbol, her body convulsing slightly in a strange rhythm. Her body’s temperature had risen a fraction of a degree. She seemed to enjoy this touch.

Continuing its delicate exploration, Tentacles placed a tentacle either side of Vani’s face, several suckers gripping her cheeks. Her entire body seemed to ripple with enjoyment, shivering within its confinement, but not struggling against it. Once again a tentacle placed a single sucker against Vani’s breast. Once again she looked toward the no symbol. Tentacles shifted its pseudopods below that breast, then placed the entire surface of a tentacle across the exposed area of flesh, every sucker contracting and expanding in rapid sequence.

Vani’s entire body shifted, seeming to convulse. Tentacles loosened all its pseudopods, afraid of harming her. Vani suddenly looked sharply towards the no symbol. Tentacles removed the tentacle from her mid-section. Vani’s entire head inclined toward the no symbol. Confused, tentacles began to slowly tighten the grip of its pseudopods again. Vani looked slowly towards the yes symbol. Rearranging its pseudopods, Tentacles placed the same tentacle touching Vani’s mid-section—with two suckers and the fleshy tip touching the underside of her breast, making the motion as deliberate as possible.

Vani looked away from the yes symbol—but she didn’t look towards the no symbol.

Tentacles performed the same action with its suckers, rapidly expanding and contracting them. Vani shuddered and convulsed again, her face continuing to look upwards. It was then that Tentacles began to understand that the convulsion was an involuntary reaction to this external stimulation. While Vani’s flesh was not as sensitive as its own, it still served as a powerful sensory input. With that information now in hand, Tentacles understood the need not to touch Vani’s breasts or her lower ‘no’ region—they were far more sensitive, and thus vulnerable to damage, than the rest of her body. With deliberate care Tentacles lowered its final tentacle on to the upper surface of Vani’s left breast, allowing the suckers to gently caress the smooth, supple flesh.

Very slowly, Vani turned towards the yes symbol.

Vani felt her breathing slow. She couldn’t help it—this felt like an important moment, basically wearing Tentacles’s entire body as a BDSM suit. Not to mention how much those damn suckers tickled when they did that thing. It was a weirdly sexual non-sexual kind of stimulation, and it was driving her mad. Even the thought of breeding with Tentacles didn’t seem anywhere near as strange anymore—not if it could do this to her all the time. Hell, I might have problems leaving the house now. She was also very glad Tentacles hadn’t even tried touching her womanhood—because right now she was so stupidly wet she knew she had to be leaving puddles on the floor. And that was even before it started tickling the top of her breast, suckers somehow carefully avoiding her nip—nope. Maybe it was an accident, but it completely took her breath away.

Maybe having sex with a giant alien tentacle thing would be good. What the hell am I thinking? It was something more than her usual level of horniness, but she also had to trust that Tentacles wasn’t trying to influence her. Well, at least not chemically, because damn did it know how to turn a woman on. She sighed, body going limp, letting out a ragged breath. Was she even considering this? Right now, and would she let Tentacles watch as she did?
Vani shook her head, trying to clear it. Her overactive sex drive was once again fogging things up. Maybe she needed a shower. Yes, a shower. Something to cool off—and an excuse to keep Tentacles away for some time. Time that she would use to sort out her lustful feelings for be-tentacled aliens, and the idea of being ‘bred’ by said alien. Yes, it was weird; Yes, she was weird for even considering it; Yes, it would probably feel amazing…

Vani shook herself free of Tentacles, racing up the stairs to the bathroom, locking the door behind her. She was breathing heavily, panting as if she’d just run a marathon. She needed time to work through this great mass of confusing thoughts and feelings. The cold water did nothing to cool her ardent desire.
The shower pounded against Vani, chilling her skin and somehow fuelling her desire for that alien touch. She shivered, one hand sliding down through her crotch, the other squeezing her breast. Damn it if being cocooned by Tentacles hadn’t made her horny as all fucking hell. She shivered again, tweaking the shower to a lukewarm body temperature. There was no way to avoid it—her nails dug sharply into the flesh of her breast. She was actually considering fucking a tentacled alien. She gasped as a single finger toyed with her anus. She’d seen what it could do. Her other hand switched breasts, pinching the nipple hard. She fell back against the wall of the shower, knocking over the shampoo and one of her spare lubes. The way those little tentacles could transform, getting longer, thicker, flatter, or curling and poking in almost impossible shapes.

Vani shivered again, aware that none of it was from the cold. She rinsed her finger, then covered it in some lube. She ran it up and down the outside, between the folds in her thighs, pressing, pinching her labia together. Her right hand continued to almost assault her breasts, working roughly at the flesh, not sure if she wanted it to hurt because she wanted to stop, or because she sometimes enjoyed that pain. She grit her teeth and closed her eyes, both hands now clawing into her breasts. Her treacherous mind asked what it would feel like to have dozens of little suckers doing the same.

“Fuck. Me.”

Vani panted, head down under the stream of water. It seemed that nothing could distract her from the unique possibility of fucking an alien. Not even the thought of old Frank’s comical account of being abducted and probed by the little green men. Vani spread her legs, one hand gripping the handrail so she didn’t fall. The way old Frank always told that story, she swore she probably would’ve liked those aliens. The real deal was so much better.

“What. The fuck. Is wrong. With me?”

Hands rolling down her sides, Vani hooked two lubed up fingers—freshly lubed—deep into her pussy. She was trying to find the special spot, and rub the heel of her hand into her swollen clit at the same time. Then came the shocking revelation that she had two hands, and one of them was idle. That made things so much easier, the fingers of one hand pressing against her g-spot, the fingers of her other hand gently tweaking and pinching her clit. Sometimes it was harder when she didn’t have anything in there. Not today—it felt like she was about to squirt so hard she’d launch from the fucking shower. She laughed at the image, a little of the tension draining away—then it hit her as her fingers continued to move, a shuddering wave that collapsed her knees, leaving her gasping for breath under a tepid shower.

“Fucking. Lord. Above.” She swore floridly, arms unable to lift her. All these thoughts about actually having sex with the thing now living in her house. And she was giving it serious thought too—maybe not the idea of breeding, but definitely letting it play with her. With a ragged breath she managed to rise enough to turn off the shower, rolling and sliding down against the wall of the recess. At least in here she didn’t have to worry about wet spots, or cleaning up afterwards. And maybe that would be the best place to do it the first time, keep all evidence well hidden. She shook her head in annoyance, because a) she knew it was going to happen, and b) it would happen where it happened, whatever felt most natural.

It took several minutes before she felt she could trust her knees again, standing slowly, towelling off. There were times she regretted being naked so often, and this was one of them. With
Tentacles around she still felt a little vulnerable and unsteady—and she just knew it would be waiting behind the door. She opened it slowly, towel wrapped around her middle like a shift. Tentacles moved back from the door with an odd ripple, larger tentacles waving softly. The smaller ones were already starting to sign.

Vani health good?

“Yes,” Vani placed the palm of her left hand against the suckers of one tentacle, enjoying the sudden tickling sensation. “But I’m still concerned about the mind control you mentioned.”

Tentacles not sure how to answer. Has Vani’s mind changed?

“Maybe. I didn’t think I would ever consider having sex with an alien.”

Sex is breeding?

“The actions, but without actually breeding.”

For what purpose?

“Pleasure, intimacy, bonding.”

Please explain to Tentacles. Understanding difficult.

As Vani talked, Tentacles found itself intrigued by the concept of long term bonding that she spoke of—with the greatest benefit being to any offspring from the pairing. It was not an entirely unique trait, but it was certainly one that it hadn’t encountered in a very long time. Its own kind placed little value on long term pairings—their young hatched self-sufficient, and were easily trained with chemical memory sequences. But this particular revelation also gave Tentacles a much deeper insight to certain features of Vani’s race. One truly notable point was their capacity for something Vani called ‘intuition’—something she defined as the ability to have or grasp knowledge, without understanding where it came from, or having prior experience.

Talk about race quickly developed to discovering additional facts about the planet they lived on—something they called Earth. They lacked orbital infrastructure, interplanetary flight, external colonies, and even lacked planar depth. Stuck on an island at the bottom of a gravity well, seemingly without the desire to escape sideways instead of up. Vani continued to talk rapidly and passionately about various probes the humans had sent into the outer system—so Tentacles altered its opinion slightly, understanding that they were slowly feeling their way upwards, ignoring the possibility of outwards shifts.

More information came to light, seasons, the annual rotation period, climatological extremes. Most fascinating was the variety of fauna—of which Bosko appeared to be a tame version. When Vani began speaking of oceans and abyssal depths Tentacles felt a pang of homesickness.

Is Vani far from ocean?

“Yes,” Vani reached down to pat Tentacles’s main body. “But there’s a big lake not far from here if you want to swim around.”

We go to lake. Not now. But go in future.

“Sure. Should be lots of fish in there too, in case you get hungry while you’re diving.”
Fish good.

The following conversation turned circular, then went back to language lessons, Vani leading them both downstairs. Tentacles was intrigued when Vani sat, starting to draw with the wax rods. She gave the drawing to Tentacles, asking if it could tell which colours were different. Pseudopods extended into fine filaments, carefully tracing the shapes within the drawing. It didn’t know what colour was, but it could taste different chemical compositions in broad regions of the drawing. Only when it started counting the spurs did it realise what Vani had drawn.

Itself.

But the drawing was not accurate. Not true to life. The essence of its image existed without the reality being present, giving a most peculiar sensation of unease. Vani had not done this deliberately, it knew. As a visual creature her perception was very different—or perhaps it was her fingers that lacked the dexterity to create a fully representational image. It asked as much, and Vani explained that she had simply created a rough sketch—an image only ever intended to have vague resemblance to the actuality of the subject.

Can Tentacles touch Vani?

“Why?”

To create drawing of Vani.

“You can touch me in the allowed places.”

There was a pregnant pause as Tentacles slid closer, several pseudopods climbing around Vani’s smooth legs while others tasted the wax rods, or retrieved sheets of paper. Already as the pseudopods moved it began to draw, creating a complex image of Vani as it saw her—from every side at once. There were notable blanks as it moved up her body, expanding around her thighs and over her stomach, more pseudopods reaching up to twine around her arms, feeling the soft covering of fine hairs. With a free tentacle it wrote the glyphs on another sheet.

Tentacles touch Vani’s breasts to finish drawing?

“To finish the drawing.”

Tentacles was careful, making sure to apply only the slightest pressure to what it now knew to be a very sensitive part of Vani’s anatomy. It was still more than enough to be able to draw her accurately. It didn’t bother asking to touch the lower ‘no’ region. Retracting its pseudopods, Tentacles held up the drawing, passing it to Vani.

Vani took the weird, multi-hued sheet and simply stared at it for a moment. Is this what I look like to that thing? She frowned, trying to make heads or tails of the image. It took some effort, but she soon realised that the colours were meant to be something like a contour map, and that this was her from every angle. At once. It was like unwrapping a cube into squares on a flat plane. Except that this was so much more complex it was almost incomprehensible. It was also inconceivably accurate, spanning several sheets from head-to-toe and side-to-side. She wondered briefly about using it as a UV map for some 3d modelling—not that she could really make use of it at her level.

“This is hard to read—hard to understand.” Vani collected the images, placing them on the table in what she hoped was the correct pattern. “Could you draw me using only your echo-location?”
“That’s fine. I’d just like to see how different it is.” And Vani sat patiently, watching as Tentacles worked, a simpler, fuzzier drawing taking shape. That drawing also included various objects from around the room, looking almost like a panoramic fish-eye photo. It seemed as if Tentacles’s senses always covered its whole surface, or every direction within its environment.

Vani satisfied?

“Yes. I find it interesting that your drawings are all panoramic, either with touch or with echolocation.”

Does this confuse Vani?

“A little. You remember what I said about eyes?”

You have two, forward facing. Understanding now happening. Vani’s perception is primarily arc-planar. Tentacles’s perception is radial-polar. Perceptual models difficult to integrate.

“Yeah,” Vani laughed softly, rising from the floor. There was a lot that needed doing today, and it was already after noon. She would have to put off her fascination with Tentacles for at least a little while and do some damn work. But after that…
It was after dinner, Vani enjoying a small bowl of ice cream while Tentacles attempted to eat an orange whole—even though she’d instructed it how to peel and separate one during the afternoon. It must have sensed her watching, smaller tentacles saying something about texture flavourness, trying to explain why the whole fruit was tasty to it. Vani just shrugged, gulping down another spoonful of coconut chocolate ripple. She wanted to speak candidly with Tentacles—though all their ‘speech’ to this point had been nothing but candid. She wanted to ask about breeding—and if its species had anything like sex, given it had seemed confused by the notion.

Rinsing out her dish, Vani saw that Tentacles was finished with its meal too. She started running the water to wash the dishes from the last few days, pulling on a pair of rubber gloves. Dish gloves, not her other rubber gloves. She sighed—she just couldn’t avoid it, she was a very sexual woman, and that was something that had driven away at least one of her lovers. Apparently there was such a thing as too much sex for some people. She talked as she worked, glancing over her shoulders to see Tentacles’s replies.

“Tentacles understands. Mindsharing is special for beings with chemical memories. Act of giving is mild pleasure, when done many at once. Understand if Vani does not want, because similar to mind influence chemicals.
“Maybe in the future,” Vani finished the last few dishes. “When I feel it might be okay to be influenced by some weird tentacled alien. For now, think you can help with the dishes?”

Help how?

Tentacles was confused, until Vani handed it a rough fibrous sheet, with many loops of fibre across the surface. It was woven, with the two short edges fringed. Vani guided one of its pseudopods to the the metal rack on the sink, while miming a rubbing motion with the tentacle that held the woven fibre sheet. With its echo sense Tentacles could see Vani doing much the same, flipping the item over twice for some reason.

Why does Vani rotate item?

“Making sure it’s dry before I put it away.”

Understand.

Tentacles wiped down the bowl she had given it, using several pseudopods to conduct a brisk surface inspection for liquids. It signed that it was dry. Vani took the bowl and placed it in an upper receptacle against the wall. Then she made a contemplative sound and handed Tentacles two more woven fibre sheets. It was some kind of challenge—Vani could dry only one item at a time, though her inspection was swifter. Tentacles could dry faster, but its own inspection was a good deal slower. Still, it could do three at once. A game was very quickly made. A game which Vani won by a small but reasonable margin.

What does Vani win?

“The satisfaction of having the dishes done.”

That is not answer.

“It wasn’t a contest.”

Then what was it?

“Being useful. It’s interesting to have you around—very interesting—but you have to be smart enough to know that feeding you won’t be free.”

Principle of exchange in value. Trade in useful skill for reward, physical.

“Something like that, yeah,” Vani walked to the lounge, picking up her metal tablet. “Y’know, I bet I could figure out a way for you to use this—it’s got text to voice after all.”

Tentacles is intrigued by this notion.

“Here, lemme try it.”

It didn’t take long to understand the layout of the squares and rectangles on the bottom half of the device. The top remained blank, flat, and slightly warm with thermal radiation. But from somewhere in the device came a voice—with some delay—after a sequence of rectangles had been depressed. The voice was unlike Vani’s; deeper, a bass note, but lacking the variation in tone her voice carried with every word. Artificial. It was much easier to understand given glyph
sequences—but it had no intent that could be read.

Tentacles quickly set to work, listening with rapt attention to the voice issuing from the device as it began to describe metallurgy on this world. It followed the key sequences exactly, searching the database for any planar information. It seemed that in this world multi-planar beings were considered fictional—and horrifying, from most accounts. The largest compilation of errors came from a historical being known as Lovecraft—though in fairness it seemed that his somnolence was often unduly disturbed by such extradimensional creatures. Further accounts had scant information, though Lovecraft had the essence of it correct.

Priests and temples, they weren’t required to break through—neither did they make the task any easier. All they managed was to mark what might be a suitable emergence point for the being they were attempting to commune with. At Vani’s insistence, Tentacles explained why it had been searching such topics. Vani understood the concept of homesickness, but laughed at the idea of being able to take over a planet—even when Tentacles explained the plan.

“Little buddy, you might think we can take over the world with a handful of tentacle babies and some mind influence, but trust me when I say it can’t be done.” There was a thoughtful silence. “Why would you want to take over the whole planet anyway?”

Resources. Food. Oceans.

“Yeah, sure, but I’m feeding you, I’ll take you to the lake—hmm, maybe tomorrow, maybe the next day—and most resources we got are just rocks. You heard what we had on metallurgy.”

Vani makes point. Desire still remains.

“What would you do with all that then?” Vani pressed. “How would you use it?”

Tentacles would…

Tentacles waved its pseudopods in confusion. When it had first arrived it had had a grand plan involving the domination of the entire planet, but deeper research had showed an alarming amount of hostile fauna and extreme environments—and several predatory fauna species perfectly adapted to those extremes. Vani forcing it to examine its motives more closely was an excellent manoeuvre—it showed a high calibre intelligence, along with the desire to effectively influence others. It didn’t have the pure chemical persuasion that Tentacles itself might have used, but it was certainly enough to make it stop and think. Especially given the likely energy and resource expenditure in conquering such a planet. Perhaps as a long term stratagem—for now, Tentacles wondered if it could be content merely with Vani’s company and her ability to show it a small, safer, part of the world.

Yes, that will be ideal. More reconnaissance is required before this planet can be assessed for conquest potentials.

With its pseudopods, Tentacles began forming the glyphs again.

Tentacles is unsure conquering Earth would be a wise resource investment. Tentacles requires more knowledge of the planet before it can assess requirements.

“I still don’t want you trying to take over the planet.”

Even if Vani becomes co-ruler?
“Tempting, but I’m happy here. I was hoping you might be too.”

Possibility exists. If conquest is untenable, Tentacles is likely to be happy with Vani.

“Maybe I shouldn’t tell you about sharks then—they live in those oceans you want to conquer.”

Tentacles pushed the rectangles in sequence, and listened to what the tablet had to say about sharks. Its horror grew with every passing moment. Surely it could defeat a handful, one-on-one. But a whole school? And if they entered a feeding frenzy? A shiver ran across its entire surface. This was a truly hostile planet—it had not been lucky with its planar travel this time. And even if it did gather sufficient resources from this world, where else could it go? There were a number of unexplored planes, near the lowest potential for conquest—this being one of the more attractive prospects. Perhaps it truly was time to settle, and begin the difficult process of uniplanar integration.

Tentacles is now mostly sure that conquest of Earth oceans would result in Tentacles being eaten.

“Sharks aren’t even the worst of it,” Vani’s voice had become quietly unsettling. “Sperm whales think colossal squid are delicious.”

Tentacles dutifully searched both of those creatures. The squid it could probably commune with—despite the vast size differential. The whales, not so much. In less than a day its ideas of world domination had gone from a loose but achievable goal to near impossible—unless it managed to avoid the deep oceans completely. Only then did it understand Vani had been forcing it to research the most dangerous fauna from that particular environment.

“Alright little buddy, I’m going to bed.”

Somnolence required?

“Yes.”

No touch until wake. Understanding.

“Good. Have fun doing your research.”

And Tentacles did, learning as much as it could about the various biomes of the planet, flora and fauna, and then onto human megastructures and advanced physics. Given the sheer riches on offer—and the fact Vani offered a zero energy alternative to long term conquest—Tentacles began considering the idea of uniplanar integration with far more seriousness. It would take time, anchoring it forever to this dimension, but it would also allow it to bring through a few of its more esoteric capabilities—those which were compatible with the physics of this plane.

There was also the lake to look forward to, with the possibility of free food. Not, of course, that it needed to feed, but that Vani seemed to expect it to do so, not understanding how its energetic structure was mostly self-regenerating. It would be able to survive for months without food—but as it was so plentiful here, why let it go to waste? Tentacles shivered in anticipation. Yes. Integration here was a good choice. Breeding with Vani was a good choice. Perhaps even stopping on this plane was a good choice—nothing deeper could be nearly as inviting.
When she woke, Vani was idly fingering herself, half-dreaming about what those little tentacles could do to her—inside and out. And yet, she wasn’t even tempted to rub one out this morning. Even with the rain pattering against the roof. She wanted something more than sex, and she hated having to acknowledge it. Sure, the sex was fun, but it wasn’t something you could build a relationship on—she’d tried in the past, of course, but it had never worked out. Her fingers traced up and down her ribs, around her stomach, resting gently under the crease of her breasts. She was turned on, but it wasn’t enough to make her want anything. At least, not anything more than a playful touch here and there.

The idea came to her then. If she did fuck Tentacles, it was going to need to know her body—both what it felt like, and what it could do. It wouldn’t hurt to let it touch her. Everywhere this time. Let it do the thing where she was trapped in writhing tentacles, tickled to the edge of glory. Let it force her around, understand what her body could and couldn’t take—and then she would do the same for it. Explain how pain could sometimes be pleasurable, how the addition of discomfort could amplify the pleasure so—despite how counter-intuitive it would sound. She was already out of bed, not even thinking about breakfast.

The rain somehow added to the scandalous desire as she crept quietly down the stairs, carpet plush against her soles. Her hand rested against the polished wood of the banister. She smiled—she’d had fun up there once, but the headache afterwards had kinda ruined things. Sure, the risk made it feel more powerful, but it was a stupid risk. Not one she’d do again… at least, not without some cushions to land on. She was at the bottom of the stairs, and Tentacles waved in greeting, still studying something—she squinted at the screen—exoplanets.

Understanding lightmaps difficult. Metal device cannot render into audio format.

Vani sighed, crouching next to the laptop. She picked up one of the scattered sheets of paper they’d been using, and a crayon. She quickly sketched the axes and the graph curve. “Here.”

Tentacles used several of its smaller tentacles to study the sheet.

Information clarity surprising. Why can metal device not perform?

“You just can’t see it, the display is just little light cells.”

Tentacles has minor temperature/photosensitive cells over entire body. Pattern not detectable.

“144 dpi—dots per inch. Here—” she handed Tentacles a small ruler, marking out an inch. “—this is an inch. Make it a square, fill it with 144 points. Could you sense that?”

Easy if material or state change involved.

“It’s not. Electrical current fires the light in there.”

Answer to why non-keyed panel caused tingle sensation.

“I’ve got something else that might cause that, but not right now.”

Now is Vani food intake period, yes?
“Maybe,” Vani stepped over to the cupboards in the kitchen. “Did you study anatomy last night?”

No.

“Do it while I eat, I want to run some experiments.”

On Tentacles?

“With you, and me, about touch—I will let you touch everything. That’s part of the experiment.”

Other parts?

“To understand how I feel about your touch. To learn about the strengths and weaknesses of both our bodies.”

Tentacles studies now. Self-study of Vani’s mind-state intriguing concept.

Vani ate in silence, just slightly nervous about the experiment she was about to undertake. So far Tentacles had proved considerate and accepting, and honest—even about wanting to try and take over the world. But there was always that little voice, one she couldn’t silence, one she figured everyone had. A little voice telling her to be careful—more careful than she already was about the risks here. Especially if she was going to ask Tentacles to use its beak on her, anywhere at all. She’d been nibbled on by a lorikeet at a pet store in the city once—all fun and games until it actually bit her ear. Soon enough she was finished breakfast, placing her dish on the sink.

“You want anything?”

Tentacles is not hungry.

“Then I’ll just feed Bossco first, okay?”

Tentacles continues to study.

“Alright then,” Vani rummaged in the fridge, grabbing a round of dog sausage for Bossco. She went out the back and he came bounding up, shaking himself off on the porch. He took the chunk of meat and ran into the distance. Vani shouted after him and he froze. “You better not be burying that!” Then he was running again, loping across the field and into the cover of the trees. Vani rolled her eyes.

Back inside, a nervous shiver running down her spine, Vani lay on the lounge room floor, having cleared some more space for both her and Tentacles. Tentacles sat between her legs, main body level with her ankles. Smaller tentacles seemed to shiver in anticipation, reaching up to ‘speak’.

Anatomy lesson interesting. Understanding growing within Tentacles. Differentiation of terms. Smaller tentacles called pseudopods. Vani’s smaller upper bone tentacles called fingers. Segments. Tips. Nails. Vani’s feet have toes. Ankle is interesting hinge joint. Skin is sensitive organ—very sensitive around vagina. Tentacle’s assumes this is name for Vani’s lower ‘no’ region. Tentacles assures Vani gentleness will be used for all touches near vagina. Tentacles also desires to know if Vani wants to use Yes/No symbols again.

“Y’know, I think that’s your longest ever speech, you silver-tongued little weirdo.”
Tentacles’s tongue is not made of metal. Unsure if colour applied.

“It’s a figure of speech—a metaphor. Anyway, thanks to that I can know parts of you better—and I’ll ask more later, too—but thanks for being so considerate. I don’t know if I’ll need the Yes/No symbols held up, but I guess if all your ‘pods are around me you won’t be able to listen, so yeah, let’s use them.”

Is Vani ready to start?

“Yes.”

Vani willed herself to relax, with little result. She was going to let some weird tentacled thing touch everywhere, all over her body. I guess it makes sense to be kinda scared. I guess it also makes me kind of an idiot. Letting out a quiet breath, Vani felt a soft, smooth presence trace up the arch of her foot. It felt like warm glass, but it didn’t stick. It felt slick, like something lubed up, but it left no trail or residue. It was like the finest silk, finer still, and so pleasantly warm. She felt another ‘pod pressing gently against her insole as the first crept under the hook of her big toe—she couldn’t help it, she was ticklish.

Does this touch pain Vani?

“No, it’s a reflex. I’m ticklish, so really light touches feel good—but make me move around.”

Would Vani like Tentacles to use more pressure on this touch?

“Please—unless you like trying to catch my foot with those ‘pods.”

The pressure against her foot increased, and her body started acting normally. Vani felt her breathing slow as another ‘pod twined around her ankle. Then the end of a proper tentacle pressed into her foot, the suckers immobilising her even as she felt her foot trying to twitch. It actually felt pretty damn good, being held that way. A definite note for later. She hoped it would feel as good in other places. Then Tentacles opened the flaps at the end of a ‘pod and lowered it over her pinky toe. The flaps closed a little tight, making her squirm—and inside it was wet. Vani grimaced, looking towards the ‘no’ card.

Pseudopod tasting makes Vani uncomfortable?

“It hurt a little—it’s too tight.”

Physical limitation. Can attempt to overstress muscle to reduce pressure.

“If it doesn’t hurt you.”

Can maintain for short period. Assess comfort.

They tried again, and this time it was a lot better. Still wet, but that wasn’t a problem—it made sense, in fact, if Tentacles was tasting her. Its ‘pods moved further up her leg, gently squeezing her calf muscles. It felt like a massage. She asked Tentacles to do both legs at once. The even sensation felt so much more amazing. More ‘pods started wrapping around her thighs, digging in not quite painfully into the muscle there. Her breath was suddenly coming hot and fast as a tentacle applied itself to the outside of each thigh. It felt strange, the touch subtly incomplete, being able to feel her skin being stretched ever so slightly between every sucker. The mass sensation was almost overwhelming.
Her breath ragged, Vani tensed as the tentacles moved around to the inside of her thighs. The fleshy tips of those tentacles didn’t quite brush her labia. She so badly wanted them to. She dug her fingernails into her palms—Tentacles hadn’t even touched her pussy yet, and already she was feeling horny and frustrated. And wet. And then it began, two ‘pods gently nestling against the crease between her thighs and her labia. There they felt deliciously cool. With great care another ‘pod explored the folds of her labia, gently teasing them from side to side before tenderly sliding between them. She swallowed hard.

She could feel that single ‘pod swimming inside her, the walls of her vagina pressing tight against it. She wanted to squirm and squeeze and quiver and thrust up and down that thing—and yet at the same time she didn’t, afraid of betraying something deep inside her. It was a discomfiting feeling, even if she knew it would eventually be incredibly pleasurable. But she knew she could take it; it wasn’t breaking any kind of consent. Not unless she told it stop and it didn’t. She felt a hot tear roll down the side of her face. Maybe it was too much.

“Please. Stop.” Her voice was a breathless whisper, almost afraid.

The tentacles detached from her thighs. ‘pods unwound from her legs, no longer massaging her calves. Her pinky toes were suddenly freed. With great care the final ‘pod was removed, Tentacles moving exceedingly carefully so as not to hurt or discomfort her. She wasn’t quite sure how she could explain what just happened—or that she wasn’t sure if it was a good idea to continue.

Did Tentacles harm Vani?

She shook her head and sat up, breath still coming in rapid gasps.

Is this ticklish reflex?

She shook her head again.

Tentacles does not understand. Did experiment fail?

Vani managed to let out an even breath. “Maybe. I’m not sure.”

Would Vani like touch of comfort only?

“No,” Vani shook her head. “I think… I think I need some time.”

Tentacles will wait. Will experiment recommence when Vani returns?

“I’m not going,” Vani gave a short laugh. “I just need time. That’s all. I have to decide if I’m trying to go too far, too fast.”

Understanding is difficult. Is Vani’s mind-state difficult to self-study?

“You could say that. It’s a lot to process.”

Tentacles has also processed much recently. Creating chemical memories of improvised audio collection is difficult. Lacking surface gestalt and proto-limb sensation-orientation requires radical coding paradigm.

“Alright, you lost me. I can’t even understand half of what you just said—except that it’s hard to
make memories of sound.”

In generality. Attempt was to explain specifics. Vani cannot understand chemical encoding paradigm difficulties.

“No, sorry.”

Has sufficient time elapsed for Vani to reintegrate mind-state self-study data and evaluate experiment?

“Again, no,” Vani found herself studying the carpet. “It’s… complicated.” She lay back against the carpet, staring sightlessly up at the ceiling. “I just want to lie here for a bit.”

Tentacles does not understand, but will temporarily remove its presence if Vani desires.

“Please.”

With a quiet rumble Tentacles curled up into a perfect sphere and rolled away, coming to rest in the kitchen. Vani let out a quiet breath she hadn’t known she was holding. It wasn’t any different than the first time with Eric—or Yuki—and yet… She threw her head back against the carpet, fingers carefully tracing everywhere the ‘pods had touched her womanhood. It felt so different. She knew she could trust Tentacles as much as she had previous lovers, so why? She slammed her fists against the carpet. She was still wet, but she really didn’t want to. Not now. Not with all the confusion boiling within. Why did it feel so fucking weird? She shook her head. And why was I so afraid? She didn’t have a good answer for either of those.

“Fuck.” She swore into the empty air, even less sure of what she really wanted. Is it because it actually felt good?

The only answer was the rain drumming against the windows.
Conflicting Desires

Tentacles was concerned. While Vani had explained that it would be an experiment, and that she would assessing her mind-state afterwards, Tentacles had not predicted that the outcome would be a confused negative. As far as it had been able to tell Vani was completely uninjured—it had been very careful with that pseudopod—but seemed to act as if she had been hurt. It was a curious state of affairs, and one that required further research. It reached for the metal information tablet only to have that pseudopod smacked sharply away as Vani took the tablet.

“I need to…” Vani’s pause seemed to indicate a search for the correct term. She didn’t find it. “Think about things.”

With information tablet?

“Laptop. Yes. There’s some stuff I need to look up.”

Vani does research about mind-state?

“Yes.”

All her answers had been clipped, shorter than usual. Tentacles decided that the best course of action would be to leave Vani alone until she summoned it back. With the mental equivalent of a shrug it made its way to the back door. All the time while listening to Vani there had been an enveloping background hiss, some kind of interference effect, like oil or mucous membranes on contact surfaces. Bosko was also outside—but Tentacles figured that the creature would be easy enough to distract or disable. It wasn’t like it was a shark or anything.

Further outside and Tentacles spread its pseudopods into the widest parabola it could manage. The background hiss remained all enveloping, more drum-like in the vertical plane, and opposite the wall, softer, more spread out. The obvious answer would be that Vani’s dwelling was generating the effect, but given this was new while the dwelling had previously been silent, it stood to reason that the effect might be environmental. Tentacles rolled itself onto the grass behind the dwelling.

Its upper surface was immediately bombarded by liquid projectiles, bursting to cover its entire surface, almost overloading its sensory capacity. Its tentacles beat the ground, but nothing additional was visible to its echo-sense. The sensation was almost overwhelming, hundreds of impacts every second, the liquid forming miniscule droplets and rolling down its body, tentacles, and extended pseudopods. It flattened itself to cover as much area as possible, enjoying the sensation of being on the verge of being completely overwhelmed. A shiver ran out across its entire body, the liquid on its surface leaving a rippling wake.

It was a strange thing to think of, but the sensation was close to that of mindsharing, albeit limited to touch. Tentacles lay immobile, immersed in a sea of miniature caresses and the barest whisper of an echo-sense. Through the ground it could sense the light impact of something moving purposefully towards it. Its echo-sense showed that the interloper moved on two legs, not four, as it might have feared. It could only be Vani. She gently stroked a flattened pseudopod, then returned to the edge of the dwelling.

“That rain’s kinda cold, so I’m just gonna sit here, okay?”

Tentacles signed an affirmative.
“I’m not really sure what happened before.”

Vani confusion was not an easily posited outcome for experiment.

“Yeah, I guess not. Anyway, I’d like to try again later—but this time you can only touch outside, got it?”

Tentacles only touched outside previously.

“How was that outside?” Vani’s tone indicated anger and confusion.

Vani has contiguous outer covering of skin. While touching skin, touch is only outside.

“Oh, because yo—“ Vani stopped abruptly, her angry tone replaced by one of understanding. “Because you can’t see, you define inside and outside differently, don’t you?”

Correct. Skin is outside. Organs are inside. Only opening is mouth, for food entering inside.

“I think I need to give you a more personal anatomy lesson.”

Vani offers to increase Tentacles’s understanding empirically?

“I’ll teach you myself, if that’s what you mean.”

Meaning is close enough. Tentacles accepts. Lesson begins now?

“No—I still need some time to process before I’m ready to be touched again.”

Tentacles will stay in rain. The sensation is enjoyable to Tentacles.

“I like it too, sometimes.”

Vani sat on the bottom step, rain running down her arms and back in frigid rivulets. It was more than enough to cool any latent desire, and was in fact slightly uncomfortable. But that ‘pod up inside her…it hadn’t been at all uncomfortable. It was slow, and purposeful, and had made itself quite narrow. It had been discomfiting, yes, but not uncomfortable. It actually felt kinda good—so then why did I panic? Vani didn’t have a good answer. She’d been searching all morning, finding nothing truly helpful. It wasn’t even about consent, or revoking it—because Tentacles had very much stayed within the bounds she had set, barring this single action caused by a minor misunderstanding of terms.

She still wasn’t quite sure how she felt about the whole experience either—the build-up had been excruciating, and the sudden rush of excitement powerful, but the frisson of fear and disillusion was powerful. Shivering, Vani moved back up the stairs onto the deck, sheltering under the awning. A little further away she could see Tentacles, its ‘pods now waving idly in the rain, forming odd shapes to capture and play with the droplets. Well, you could always entertain him in the shower… It wasn’t actually such a bad thought. And an anatomy lesson would probably be easier in there too…

“I hate myself sometimes.” Vani whispered into the distance.

It was easy enough knowing what she had to do; somewhat harder to accept it. The thought
occurred to her that she knew little enough of Tentacles’s anatomy—the lesson could quite easily be a two-way street to better understanding of each other’s bodies. She just had to be cold about it, clinical, like a doctor—and pretend like Tentacles was one. Easy to say, harder to do. She hoped the exposure to that touch would help normalise it, because she had to admit the idea of being the first person to have sex with an alien—actual sex, not probing like old Frank loved to claim—was pretty epic. She could be ambassador for human-tentacle relationships.

She laughed at the mental image, her in a bikini, Tentacles wearing sunglasses and a straw hat, both sipping cocktails on some lazy, sunny beach. Stupid. Ludicrous. And yet, somehow, endearing. She laughed again, heading inside to make lunch. She called out over her shoulder as she left.

“Hey, want anything to eat?”

Does Vani have new foods?

“I got some stuff you can try if you want, you want me to bring it to you?”

No. Tentacles will return to dwelling. Time in contemplation outside has been useful.

Vani busied herself in the kitchen, making a couple of sandwiches, and another half of one for Tentacles. She also had work to consider, her project out in the shed—really an old barn that had come with the place—taking on definite shape now. She still needed to take some pictures to send to the client who wanted to modify some smaller details. It was fine, art installations could be like that, and they were paying more than enough this time.

When Tentacles hauled itself in the door, Vani passed it the sandwich, which it really didn’t get too good of a grip on. A lot of it went on the floor, and Vani sighed, quickly putting it back together, then folding a tentacle around it to hold it better. Tentacles thanked her, then tore off a large chunk with its beak. Smaller chunks followed, its tongue darting out to taste between the slices with each bite.

Tentacles wishes to inquire if this food has been constructed.

“Well, yeah, I made it. Bread, lettuce, tomato, bacon, a little mustard; why?”

Variety of flavours is too rich for single ingredient food. However, construction is too weak to hold form unassisted.

“Oh, well, it’s not usually a problem for those of us with hands.”

It then took nearly an hour to explain the concept of humour—and jokes—to Tentacles in order for it to understand what had just been said to it. Vani had to admit she quite enjoyed it; teaching Tentacles anything new, in fact. She decided it was time for them to share that anatomy lesson, and so she led her erstwhile companion up the stairs and into the bathroom.

“This might be kinda weird for me, okay?”

Vani is suggesting Vani might suffer confusion-effect again?

“Maybe,” she shrugged. “I hope not.”

Tentacles echoes hopes.
“Well, I guess we get started then—and we’ll both do it, okay, point to or touch things, and ask what they are, and what they’re for.”

Combined cooperative study is enjoyable. It is not mindsharing, but still enjoyable.

Vani put a robe down on the floor and lay on top of it, allowing Tentacles to make the first move. It touched her toe.


Apologies. Tentacles enjoys learning words for making distinction of body locations. Vani may touch now.

Vani rolled over, gently taking hold of one of the oily-slick pseudopods in front of her. Tentacles explained them section by section. Tip. Flaps. Spine. Base. Vani drew her fingertips along the upper and lower surfaces, but Tentacles made no distinction between them. She gripped the base of a tentacle and started moving up. Root. Bands. Pad. Tip. Suckers. It all seemed so simple, but then, there were four of them, and twelve pseudopods to track at once. Transforming pseudopods.

Lesson continues?

“Yes. You can touch anywhere, but be gentle.”

This time the pseudopods started to climb her arms first, wrapping slowly around her wrists.


Vani did say Tentacles could touch everywhere.

“I did, but I think this time I want to guide you myself first.”

Tentacles accepts.

Vani took a deep breath, taking hold of the two nearest pseudopods, guiding them to the inside of her thighs. She decided to start higher, gently pressing the ‘pods against her landing strip, then top and tail beyond that, explaining about pubic hair. She figured it might be an important distinction later. Moving very carefully, she pressed the tips of the ‘pods to the inside of the crease between her thighs. Then again closer in, gently running the length of her inner labia. She took a moment to explain about her labia, and about the sensations she liked. With great care she took the ‘pod in her right hand and pressed it against her clit, shuddering slightly at the sheer smoothness she felt against that little nub.

Is Vani okay?

“I’m fine. It’s just… it’s very sensitive. Easy to… overload, I guess you might say.”
Tentacles will avoid this area in future if Vani prefers.

“No, it’s very important for sex. And hey, what about you, do you have any secret, super-sensitive parts?”

Tentacles has skin-sealed cloacal opening for ovipositor.

“Ovisposi—you lay eggs when you ‘breed’?”

Eggs are gestated within desirable female to absorb useful genetic material. Process may sometimes cause pain and discomfort during germination and hatching, but is not fatal.

“I guess that’s reassuring.”

Tentacles speaks only truth on this matter. If Vani were willing to breed with Tentacles, Tentacles wants Vani to understand entire process.

“Fair enough then, little buddy. May I see your ovipositor?”

Tentacles rolled sideways, and a narrow slit opened facing Vani. Vani watched in fascination as a broad, flaccid tube began to protrude. The tube grew in length, but not girth or stiffness. She reached out to touch it, but a ‘pod gripped her arm firmly before her fingers could get there. Another pair of ‘pods thinned down and wrapped around her first two fingers, gently moving them up and down before her arm was allowed to move closer.

Ovipositor is not as robust as pseudopods or tentacles, and must be protected.

“Is it sensitive?”

More than normal skin surface, but not capable of ‘overload’ Vani mentioned.

“Does it get stiff?”

Unnecessary, ovipositor is prehensile. Hold gently and feel motion.

Vani gingerly cradled the appendage in her hands, the texture much rougher than the rest of Tentacles’s oily-slick skin. She could feel the muscles moving inside, leading the tube around. It seemed flaccid, but that was only the skin, the muscular core was certainly rigid enough as it twitched against the cage of her hands.

Is Vani’s curiosity satisfied?

“Yes,” Vani smiled, sitting up on the robe. “Is there anything else you’d like to know?”

Why does Vani’s vagina have two openings—one smaller—and why is there a third, possibly unrelated opening further around Vani’s lower region?

“Well…” Vani laughed softly, a slight blush in her cheeks. *I guess I’m more human than I think.*
Vani sat on a rock at the edge of the lake, wearing a bikini in deference to common decency—whether or not she actually had any was up for debate. Her legs dangled in the cool water, kicking idly. It had been a busy day, productive for her art, and now it was time to relax. To that end she’d actually packed some toys and lubes, hidden in the cooler back up the shoreline. Tentacles was going to get a comprehensive education about those things, Vani had already decided. When was another issue. She also wanted to try swimming with Tentacles, to see how it moved in what seemed like a more natural environment for it. It was also just as well this part of the lake was hidden by a crumbled cliff face, and cut back towards the trees.

Especially given how openly Tentacles was playing in the water—then again, it claimed it could easily deal with any interlopers. Kidnapping and false memories were the flavour of the day after Vani forbade it from eating anyone. Well, that, and given how the area was rife for UFO sightings anyway, it wasn’t too likely to be taken seriously in the first place. Scanning the far shore one more time, Vani unlaced her bikini top and slid down her briefs, launching into the water stark naked.

She swam out for a few dozen meters before rolling and floating on her back, gazing up at the clouds forming in the distance. Something about the risk of doing this; of getting caught out; always turned her on in a way she couldn’t quite define. It wasn’t merely lust, or adrenaline, but something more. Some frisson of something unnamed and powerful. She almost wanted there to be someone watching. Foolish, perhaps, but it didn’t stop the want. Tentacles suddenly popped up beside her, ‘pods tugging at her arm.

Vani breathes under water?

“No. I can hold my breath for a while though.”

Define timeframe of ‘while’.

“A couple of minutes?”

Insufficient for exploration of depths. Tentacles will create cocoon for Vani diving.

“You’ll what?”

Dive. Tentacles will construct underwater cocoon for Vani to breathe.

Confused, Vani rolled and slipped under the surface of the lake. Already Tentacles looked different, a wan orange light limning its pseudopods as they began to gesticulate purposefully through the water before her. Lines expanded into a complex geometric pattern and Vani’s mind flashed to several old AMV’s she’d watched. It looked almost exactly the same. She let out a shocked breath, and was even more surprised not to see air bubbling in front of her. Instead she was floating in a cage of orange light, beams circling and weaving into a complex, ever-shifting pattern.

This is cocoon. It will adapt to suit Vani’s environmental needs. It requires much energy to maintain, but Tentacles can maintain this level for approximately one hour.

“Holy. Shit.” Vani stared in wonder. She was beginning to think Tentacles was less alien, and
more eldritch right now. After all, aliens didn’t normally use magic. She reached out to touch one of the lines, but the orange streak danced away when her hand neared it. She tried bringing both hands together, but that just created a larger hole, and a slight distension in the sphere. She reached through the side of the sphere, cold water enveloping her arm. Her arm was almost dry when she pulled it back in.

“Holy. Shit.” She had adopted a floating, cross-legged posture, and was dangerously close to hyperventilating. It also dawned on her that maybe Tentacle’s plans for world domination had not, in fact, been overly ambitious. Though it had just said even this drew a lot of energy. Vani closed her eyes, drawing in several calming breaths.

“You wanted me to explore with you?”

Yes. Vani should see steel skeleton and rotting corpse.

“Corpse of what?” Vani tried to keep her voice neutral.

Tentacles is unsure. Is not fauna that we have researched.

Well, at least it isn’t human. Vani gestured for Tentacles to lead on, then rolled her eyes and asked it to lead her.

Tentacles dove swiftly, pulling them both to the lakebed, some pseudopods fanning out into paddle shapes, others forcing water through a ring of yet more pseudopods. It was as swift and efficient a method of locomotion as any, and Tentacles enjoyed applying its knowledge of fluid mechanics to this situation. It wasn’t instinctive—this was an engineered solution. Still, the skeleton ribs of rusting steel should interest Vani, and the corpse—whatever it actually was—would hopefully provide another point of conversation in future. Perhaps even a moment of bonding as a shared discovery. Tentacles slowed as it approached the steel skeleton.

Echolocation working properly underwater, Tentacles was finally building a more comprehensive impression of Vani, more than just touch and land-echo could show. Things like body density. Structural layering. The strange haze her hair caused. At least, each time she moved a limb or other body part out of the cocoon.

The circuit must be causing visual interference for her.

Resolving to ask Vani about the situation later, Tentacles began swimming around the steel skeleton.

“It’s old…” Vani had trailed off in a way that indicated deeper thought. “It might be a river monitor, from way back.”

Where is ‘way back’?


Would Vani call this item a ‘relic’?

“It’s a shipwreck, but… maybe. Maybe if there’s something really important left on it. Otherwise it's just bits and pieces of scrap.”

Tentacles bade Vani to follow it, then swam at a leisurely pace towards the rotting corpse. It was of moderate size—between that of Tentacles and the shipwreck—and had no easily discernible structure left behind. Some jagged triangles suggested teeth, and while it was bloated and shredded—or possibly half-eaten—it had a shape that suggested it was adapted to underwater
environments. A single long spine—or perhaps tail—hung from the carcass.

“I have no idea.”

Has Tentacles discovered new species?

“I doubt. This thing’s too damaged to tell anyway. Hell, I can’t even tell if it had a skeleton.”

Tentacles could not detect presence of bones. Some small triangles may be teeth.

“I’d guess shark,” Vani ventured a possible answer. “Sometimes they’ll come up river, but this is really far inland for them.”

Other no-bone species exist?

“Can’t think of any right now, but yes, they do.”

Points of interest have been covered, does Vani wish to continue underwater exploration?

“For a while. Hey, maybe see if you can catch some fish down here.”

Enjoying the idea of displaying its hunting prowess to Vani, Tentacles sped away, already spying a tasty fish as large as the spade end of a tentacle. Tentacles rearranged itself, four tentacles forming a spearhead for speed, and all twelve pseudopods undulating in convulsive waves behind it, sending it surging towards the fish. Suddenly aware of the danger bearing down on it, the fish began darting left and right, diving and climbing in an attempt to shake off its pursuer. In a last ditch effort the fish slowed and executed a rolling dive, passing just under Tentacle’s pseudopods. The hunt was proving more than enjoyable, the target fish deceptively agile and swift for its mass.

Tentacles stopped, drifting in the current, zeroing in on its meal with echolocation. This time it primed the muscles in its tentacles for an immediate strike. As it dove, the fish darted upwards, swimming a complex—or panicked—evasive path. A lashing strike from a pseudopod barely missed it. For the sudden annoyance it felt, Tentacles was almost prepared to use a the tiniest flash of magic. But this was worthy prey, and the hunt was important.

Flipping end for end, Tentacles burst upward, tentacles slowly forming a cage around its prey. This time Tentacles saw it coming, and the spade end of one tentacle slammed into the fish, suckers holding it tight. The fish squirmed and struggled, and Tentacles savoured that first bite as blood began to flavour the water around it. It was different to the fish Vani had given it, stringier, the muscle fibres raw and elastic. The base flavour—the richness of the meat itself—was also different, but no less satisfying.

Vani watched Tentacles eat, impressed with the way it had finally trapped the fish. Underwater it ate the same way she figured a squid or octopus might eat. Still floating in the middle of the cocoon, Vani half swam towards the surface of the lake, the orange tracery fading away before her head bobbed up above the rippling water. There was no one even close to being around, though they were further out than she had expected. She was tempted to rub one out while floating right there, just for the hell of it.

She was also sorely tempted to ask Tentacles what other types of magic it could do, and whether they might be any good for sex. Or mindsharing. Vani knew that was an aspect she could never offer Tentacles, but she still wanted to do something for it the first time they had sex properly. It had said sharing multiple chemical memories was somewhat pleasurable—and while the taste and
feeling of those was beyond strange, it wasn’t unpalatable. It was at least one thing she could offer; aside from her body, of course.

When they got to shore, she decided, they would conduct another experiment. One involving chemical memories, and some form of mutual masturbation. *Some form indeed.* Vani laughed, starting the swim to shore. All the effort was going to do was get her worked up—but in this case, that would be a very good thing.
Lying on a bed of rock at the lakeshore, Vani waited patiently for Tentacles while warming her naked body in the late afternoon sun. The cooler with her toys and lube was conveniently nearby, and if she really felt like it she could stretch out and go fish for one of those toys. Right now though, she was just drying off from a swim, hands pressing against her ribs and down her hips, sliding around over her thighs, fingers lacing together over her exposed labia. She was still tempted to do this herself, but the larger part of her was waiting for Tentacles, to further their mutual understanding of each other’s very alien bodies.

At that point she recalled Tentacles’s ovipositor, thick with banded muscles, and darker than the rest of its body. Prehensile, so it had claimed, and only a bit thinner than her wrist. She was willing to attempt taking it, even if it did fill her with trepidation. She’d never tried fitting anything quite that big before. \textit{Lube and patience}, she told herself. \textit{I want to, for him? it? that?, I'm just not sure I actually can.} She had given up trying to figure out quite why she was so willing—eager, even—to have sex with an alien, eldritch, tentacled, thing. It was perhaps something about the sheer number of taboos she was breaking.

The fingers of her left hand traced a line between her thigh and labia, pressing deliciously into her skin. Her right tugged gently at the curls of her landing strip. She would wait for Tentacles, she told herself; this was just warming up. With both index fingers she pressed against her pubis and traced a line directly towards her clit. A gentle squeeze—no more—and a quick tickle of the tiny hood there. Her hands were at her sides, balled into fists, nails digging into her palms. Oh but how she wanted to. She rolled onto her stomach, the rock rough against her suddenly sensitive breasts and belly.

Her forehead now against the rock, Vani let out a frustrated sigh. She could, but then she might not be ready for Tentacles to touch her. Or she might be too sensitive. Or sleepy. Or even hornier and willing to go too far then. She rolled over again, her right hand clawing at her left breast, trying to make it \textit{hurt}. She wanted—needed—that pain to distract herself. She squeezed harder, her nails leaving bright red welts against her flushed skin. She gasped at the sudden rush of pain, both hands now gently massaging those same welts. She let out another breath, the sudden sting of pain fading slowly.

A loud splash came from nearby, and Tentacles breached the surface, drawing itself onto the rocks beside Vani. It waved in greeting, then formed several ‘pods into a dish so it could listen to her. Her hands now at her sides, Vani spoke softly to Tentacles.

“I want to run another experiment.”

What are experimental parameters?

“I want you to touch me, sexually. I want to know if I can accept it; or find it stimulating.”

Does Vani desire to guide Tentacles as in previous lesson?

“I…” Vani pursed her lips, considering. “At the start, yes.”

Experiment begins?

Tentacles had placed its main body between her knees, in what was becoming its preferred
location for these explorations. Vani took two ‘pods and guided them to her right breast, squeezing and pressing, massaging around the ‘pods to show them what to do.

“I want you to play with squeezing harder too, I’ll tell you if it hurts too much.”

Vani enjoys pain?

“Sometimes,” Vani gave a stray ‘pod a gentle nip. “Like that. It can make the pleasure so much sharper.”

Tentacles finds this notion strange. Most creatures avoid painful stimuli.

“But what if they know something better waits beyond the pain?” Vani grit her teeth against a too-tight squeeze from the ‘pods around her breast. “Okay, that squeeze was too much.”

Apologies.

“It’s okay. You just need a little more finesse,” Vani let out a quiet sigh. “And play with teasing me a little more. Try flicking my ni—oh. Yes, like that. Um, ohh, you know how your ‘pods can open at the tip?”

Vani desires Tentacles to suckle her toes again?

“Suckling, yes; toes, not so much,” Vani was wearing a devilish grin. “Carefully, on my nipples.”

Vani watched as two more ‘pods came up, their flaps opening, descending slowly towards her nipples. The sudden pinching sensation was glorious, all around, just a little tighter than her nipple clamps. There was suction as well, puckering her flesh, pulling the sensitive nubs deeper into the slightly damp tubes inside those ‘pods. Vani felt a sudden slickness between her thighs. It was more arousing than she’d thought, and she was almost willing to try fucking Tentacles’s brains out right there.

Her breath suddenly ragged, Vani asked Tentacles to stop.

Is Vani suffering mind-state confusion again?

“No, no,” she reassured it. “Just a little… a little too sensitive right now. A quick break.”

Would Vani like touch of comfort?

“Yeah, that’d be nice.”

Two ‘pods wrapped around each arm, and two wove around each leg, with four more encircling her stomach. The ‘pods pressed gently into her from all directions, and a shiver ran down her spine at the flood of sensation covering her. Her hands gripped softly around the ‘pods that were holding her arms, and her breathing soon became even again, not the ragged pants of someone in the throes of pleasure. It was an enjoyable way to cool the lustful heat burning in her core.

When Tentacles enfolded Vani in the touch of comfort, it had to admit to having a feeling of contented fulfilment. Vani’s flesh was soft, supple, and surprisingly warm. Especially around her breasts, thighs, and belly. Perhaps this was the concept of long term pair-bonding that Vani had talked of—and it had researched during a night accessing the metal tablet’s memory. It was not akin to mindsharing, or breeding, and yet, somehow, there was contentment.
As Vani began to shift and squirm within its embrace, Tentacles loosened its grip, pseudopods slowly unravelling from around its future breeding partner. Vani had now taken hold of the pad of a tentacle, her fingers and thumb firm around the flesh, guiding it down. Then Vani placed both hands on top of it and mimed a swirling motion around her breast. Tentacles tried to ape the movement, suckers rippling against the warm flesh below, almost rolling around with Vani’s breast. She shivered, but drew another tentacle down onto the nipple of her other breast, lightly pressing down and lifting up. Tentacles copied the motion, trying to centre each sucker over her nipple in turn.

Vani was now writhing against the ground, her hands balled into fists, beating against the rock. Her breath was shallow, and in its sudden concern for her, Tentacles lifted its tentacles away, removing a possible troubling sensation.

“Wow…” Vani was still panting. “I think… I think we have to be careful playing with those suckers. That, or I’m just horny as fuck right now.”

Vani is not covered in horns or keratinous growths.

Vani laughed. “It’s a phrase. We use it so say we’re really… umm… aroused. Willing to have sex. To breed with one another.”

Does this mean Vani is ready to breed with Tentacles?

“If I wasn’t in control of myself, maybe,” Vani pulled a tentacle down to caress her cheek. “But for now, its just this touch, okay?”

Tentacles understands. Would Vani like to take a quick break again?

“Uhh… maybe… what if we experiment on you for a little while.”

Experiment how?

“Well, I’m showing you how I like to be touched—so, do you like to be touched? Was there lots of physical contact when mindsharing? Some sort of mating ritual?”

Is Vani enquiring about the existence of a touch of comfort equivalent for breeding?

“Assuming it’s about touching you, yeah.”

No such touch exists—but Tentacles would like to experiment to create this new touch. Will Vani help?

“Of course I will. What did you want to try first?”

Tentacles gave the matter some thought, and was tempted by the riskier options. After a moment it pressed a single pseudopod to Vani’s lips, asking her to suckle it the same way it had suckled her nipples. Tentacles felt it as Vani’s hand took hold of the pseudopod, rising slightly so her lips could press gently against the closed flaps on the tip. A wet, slightly acidic layer coated a good portion of the tip as Vani used an unnamed muscle structure in her mouth to manipulate the pseudopod.

Then, suddenly, a contracting ring of moist, warm, supple flesh was constricting well past the tip
of the pseudopod, that same internal muscle pressing the tip around and teasing the flaps, trying to force them open. Tentacles obliged, using the flaps on that pod to press and explore the muscle structure being used on it. It seemed fascinatingly powerful, and very rough. And at that point Tentacles realised it was playing with Vani’s tongue, so very different from its own.

Vani withdrew the pseudopod from her mouth and took several deep breaths. “I… guess you… like tha… that one.”

The sensation is strong, but moderately enjoyable. Can Vani accommodate more than one pseudopod in her mouth?

“If you… if you keep… them small.”

Tentacles will carefully insert additional pseudopods until Vani indicates discomfort or a desire to stop. Acceptable?

“Just be aware that if I try and take too much I might get hurt, and I don’t regenerate like you.”

This is why Tentacles will be careful.

Tentacles slid the first pseudopod back into Vani’s mouth. Forming another’s tip into a gentle taper, it managed to push that in without undue effort, or any seeming concern from Vani. A third pseudopod crept into Vani’s mouth, and Tentacles could feel her skin going taught against its own banded muscle. This would be Vani’s limit. Flaps teased and tickled Vani’s tongue, and another tickled a strange growth hanging from the roof of her mouth at the rear.

Vani rolled over, explosively expelling all the pseudopods with a giant, hacking cough. She continued coughing for several seconds, slowly regaining her composure.

“Do not. Touch that. Again.” From the clipped manner and elevated volume, Tentacles understood that it had done something very wrong. “You’re lucky I didn’t throw up.” Vani coughed again, making an odd gulping noise, panting for air. “Very fucking lucky.”

Tentacles offers sincere apologies for distressing Vani.

“And right now I’m just a bit too pissed to accept that, considering my body thought it was choking on alien wing-wong and decided to get rid of all of it.” as she spoke, still somewhat curt, Vani was rummaging around in the storage container she’d brought with her. “Aha, my beer. I knew I threw another one in.” There was a sharp crack, followed by a fading hiss. One arm around her knees, the other holding her beer, Vani stared off into the distance. She no longer felt anywhere near as horny. There was really only one way to sum up her feelings, and as she fell back against the sun-warmed rock, she swore.

“Well, fuck.”
Looking forward

Tentacles lay in the back of Vani’s pickup—the term she used to describe her vehicle—sheltered from the afternoon sun by a covering of synthetic, waterproof fabric. It was a wise precaution to hide itself from other interested parties. Vani had spoken of ruining ‘the moment’, the phrase used in a somehow concrete form despite the vagueness of the description. Then, after she had calmed somewhat, she had explained to Tentacles about reflexes, and recommended that it do further research on any reflexes that it might trigger—or attempt to avoid triggering—in the future.

As they moved, the constant vibration allowed Tentacles to see for some distance around them. Not entirely clearly, given their speed, but enough for flashes of what must be nearby. The surface they moved along was hard, compacted, and not entirely even. It conducted and reflected sound in chaotic patterns, creating intriguing overlaps in Tentacles’s echo sense. Beyond the hardened strip was bare earth, and beyond that was a soft whisper implying light foliage, perhaps grasses. The occasional burst of reflections spoke of bushes, or even small trees.

There were regular structures, spaced at precise intervals, and made of wood. They extended past the range of Tentacles’s echo sense at the speed it was moving, but it knew enough about various flora to know that these were not trees of any kind. It resolved to ask Vani about the structures when they arrived at the house. The path they traveled was straight and long, with few segments that triggered Tentacles’s inertial senses. It recalled enough about the topography near Vani’s dwelling to know they were close, a rapid series of switchbacks followed by a sharp, almost ninety degree turn.

It was also the ground texture that changed, the hard surface giving way to something looser, softer. Dirt. They weren’t far from the house, and as they approached Tentacles drew back the covering Vani had thrown over it. Turbulent air buffeted its upper surface in a vaguely enjoyable way, and it spread itself out through the rear compartment of the vehicle, accepting all the airflow it could handle.

In the cab of the pickup, Vani toed the brakes and eased the old pickup to a stop just in front of the house. She left the engine running as she jumped out, folding down the tailgate so Tentacles could disembark more easily. Vani watched with interest as it seemed to flow almost liquidly out of the back of the truck, seemingly at odds with the weight she knew it had. Directing it to meet her in the house, Vani went through the normal routine of parking the truck in the barn, then walked back to the house barefoot.

Once inside she prepared her laptop for Tentacles, then went upstairs to take a shower and wash the salt water off, and any mud that might have been left between her toes. One disadvantage of walking barefoot, but sometimes the ground having that kind of give was just… nice. She’d also brought her cooler full of toys back in, and having a shower was an excuse to give them a quick rinse as well.

Hot water streamed down her back, pounding against tense muscles. She hadn’t really felt that tense, but she also conceded that Tentacles’s mistake might have tangled her up a bit. It wasn’t really Tentacles’s fault, but it still had some negative effects. Vani sighed, turning around, soaping up her breasts and stomach. She recalled a stupid stunt she’d pulled with a college girlfriend that had left a dent in the shower ceiling in their dorm. The good old soap launcher trick. Vani eyed the ceiling with some suspicion.

Some time later, clean, with her toys rinsed, and wearing an apron over nothing, Vani began
preparing dinner. Steak, with a side of greens. She recalled Tentacles saying using its magic was draining, so she offered it the option of a steak as well.

Is ‘steak’ energetic?

“If you mean it gives me energy, yeah. Lots of protein in red meat.”

Meat is animal flesh, and is coloured?

“Yes. And sort of. Red meat comes from larger animals, grazers like cows and deer. White meat comes from smaller, faster things like chicken and fish.”

Then steak is good for eating. Tentacles must replenish energy utilised for Vani underwater breathing cage.

“That really was magic?”

There is complex physical explanation, but Tentacles doubts Vani’s world understands core planar principles.

Vani gave that a moment’s thought. “Airplanes, yeah. but I’m guessing you’re talking about something else, like a… multiverse? maybe?”

Concept of multiverse is similar, but inexact. Complex interactions between planar energy potentials allow manipulation of higher energetic states and corruption of localised physics.

“So… it’s sort-of science, and sort of not?”

Explanation is difficult. Tentacles doubts its ability to explain even to top field theorists on planet.

Vani stared at the mass on the kitchen floor, trying to figure out what it was really trying to say. After a few moments thought she shrugged, putting it to the back of her mind, and added some spices to the steaks as they cooked. The peas were cooking, and the broccoli was almost done steaming. She opened the fridge and tore a few leaves off the lettuce in the crisper drawer. She also wondered how Tentacles would respond to the new flavours.

It didn’t take much longer for the steaks to finish, and Vani plated up one serving for herself, and another for Tentacles, placing it on the floor in front of the creature. She trimmed the fat off her steak, then carefully cut it into bite sized chunks, taking the occasional piece of broccoli as she cut. The steak itself was tender, cooked medium, and flavoured with a hint of Indian spices. It was true that cooking could be a chore sometimes, but the end result was usually worth it.

She turned to watch Tentacles, seeing its tentacles holding the steak close to its beak while the beak tore off large chunks to be swallowed whole. Its tongue occasionally darted out to taste the meat, and whenever that happened its ‘pods seemed to squirm in satisfaction or curiosity.

Tentacles inquires why this meat tastes of complex organics and aromatics, and not just animal flesh.

“I used spices, they enhance flavours.”

Tentacles approves of this practice.
“I’m glad you do, it takes effort to get those right,” Vani looked down at the plate in front of Tentacles as she spoke. “What do you think of the greens?”

Softened plant mass provides useful chemical compounds in easily digested state. Small seeds lack effective flavour or compounds not found elsewhere. Raw leaf tastes mostly of water, with minimal nutrients; however, crunch of leaf in beak is most satisfying.

“So, the first is broccoli,” Vani proceeded to spell it out for Tentacles. “The ‘seeds’ are called peas; and the ‘leaf’ is lettuce.”

Is it common human custom to combine plant masses and animal flesh when consuming nutrients for energy restoration?

“Pretty much, yeah,” Vani spoke around a mouthful of broccoli. “You gonna help me with the dishes once you finish?”

Tentacles will exchange time performing labour for continued shelter and sustenance.

“Hey, maybe you can help wash this time too, I’ve got an idea.”

Waiting patiently for Vani to finish explaining, Tentacles began wrapping its pseudopods around her arms, following the motions she made in the water in the sink. Two pseudopods were dedicated to placing the dishes in the correct places in the draining rack—a contraption of wire mesh Vani had placed upon the bench for the specific purpose of letting water and enzymatic cleaning agents run off the dishes. This appeared to be a common human habit, as few humans hunted for food in this epoch—another clear sign of an advanced civilisation. As they worked together, Tentacles noticed Vani was allowing it to cover and explore more and more of her body, only placing a hand against a single pseudopod as it neared her vagina.

Tentacles accepted the limit, attempting to combine its touch of comfort with the manner in which she had instructed it to touch her earlier, by the lake. Tentacles noticed the change as Vani tensed, her muscles going stiff.

“Stop wriggling, damn it, it’s tickling me, and I can’t concentrate.” Tentacles stopped its exploratory movement and continued with the task at hand, helping Vani to dry the dishes. “Better.”

After they finished, Tentacles slid off Vani’s back, retreating to the lounge, planning to continue its studies with the metal tablet.

“You didn’t have to jump off,” Vani’s voice was soft. “It’s alright to wrap me up around the house sometimes, just ask, okay?”

Vani wished Tentacles to stay in touch of comfort?

“Yeah, it was nice. I think I actually quite like it—it doesn’t even have to be a sexual thing, right?”

Touch of comfort is normally used for restoring mental/emotional balance. Tentacles was unaware it was being not intentionally sexual.

“That’s okay,” Vani reached out to grip a pseudopod, pulling it closer. “How about we just spend some time wrapped up, and talk about what you want now you know you can’t conquer the planet.”
That gave Tentacles pause, the idea that Vani wished to hear of its future plans—beyond mere conquest and the idea of breeding with her. *She wishes to establish a deeper rapport.* And with that Tentacles was forced to restructure its mental image of Vani’s mindstate as being beyond simple sapience, and placed it among the higher tier of cooperative cultures it had previously encountered. Rare though they might be, cooperative cultures had unusual synergies that could prove incredibly dangerous to would-be conquerors. In fact, Tentacles was surprised that this had not been made common knowledge. It knew why after a moment’s thought—and consideration of how information might be delivered to the metal tablet.

*Tentacles was not told because this is basic assumed foreknowledge of all species members. Explanations of such obvious concepts are unnecessary to humans.* It was revelation after revelation, and it germinated ideas from these concepts as it enfolded Vani in a gentle embrace of tentacles and pseudopods. It started with Vani’s core this time, pseudopods sliding smoothly over warm flesh as they encircled Vani’s stomach. Another pseudopod crept up Vani’s back, past her shoulder blades—a term Tentacles found confusing due to the lack of blades, sheathed or otherwise—and over her shoulder. That pseudopod continued slowly as another mirrored it on Vani’s left, both now gliding gently over the soft, supple skin of her breasts, now flushed with sudden warmth.

Four more pseudopods started their journey down Vani’s thighs, avoiding her vagina, holding her legs firmly as the secondary pseudopod in each pair flowed down and around the tight muscles in Vani’s calves. The tips of those pseudopods pressed up against the soles of Vani’s feet—firmly, such that it didn’t tickle. That left four pseudopods free to bind around Vani’s arms, but none to communicate with. Tentacles decided on a different tact, each tentacle winding carefully around Vani’s arms, one upper, one lower, with the pads meeting above and below Vani’s palms, suckers gently holding onto the skin they met.

Now that Vani was enfolded—and that neither of them seemed to feel the need to move—Tentacles began considering Vani’s question with greater import. What did it want, now that it knew conquest truly was untenable? Was there still a purpose to breeding with Vani? Even if there wasn’t, was it worthwhile to remain in this location, on this plane? How could it know its own desires, when the instinct to rule and dominate—by subterfuge and intrigue normally—was so strongly ingrained?

It decided to pose a similar question to Vani, to establish a baseline by which it might create a reasonable answer.

What does Vani want now; abstract?

“Can’t think of a good answer, eh?” There was a hint of smugness in Vani’s voice, but nothing more. ‘I’m not really sure myself. I went to college, got my arts degree, and came back out to the country. I just make stuff from scrap, sell it sometimes, I guess maybe I hope one day I’ll be one of those big names in art galleries, the kind that people talk about. I had ideas about being an engineer to, or a tradie, but I was never brilliant at math. Passable, yeah, just not great. Then in college I also discovered BDSM—I’ll explain more later—and thought maybe I could get rich selling sex tapes or something, but it kinda cheapened it for me, so I went back to my art.

“Okay fine, yeah, I do get a little money here and there from those downloads, but its kinda pocket change compared to my art commissions. Oh, and I guess one day, maybe, I had vague ideas about having a family of my own, but finding the right person is hard, so I kinda put that on hold too. I’m still young, so it’s not a big issue yet, but it might be one day.”
Tentacles took a moment to process all this information, assessing what Vani was saying, and what she might only be implying in some cases. After a few minutes of amicable silence it had compiled an answer of its own for Vani’s initial question of what it wanted.

Tentacles still wishes to breed with Vani in future, for the genetic viability of species continuation. Tentacles also wishes to have a comfortable existence for itself, where it is useful, and free from possible predation or undue risk of injury. Tentacles also wishes to expand its knowledge base of Earth based sciences and theory, in order to better understand physical and metaphysical limitations of this plane. Tentacles also tentatively desires to understand and perform long-term pair-bonding behaviours with Vani, as Vani has previously explained.

“You know what?” Vani sounded deeply thoughtful when she spoke. “That actually sounds pretty damn reasonable for a tentacle monster that fell out of the sky and wanted to take over the planet a week ago. We can probably work on a lot of those thing together—and while I don’t particularly want to breed, I do want to try having sex with you at some point. Breeding, I think, might be something we have to have considerable discussion about.”

Tentacles can accept this compromise on breeding. Breeding is considered biological imperative for species, but is not time critical.

“Good,” Vani shifted slightly within the embrace of tentacles and pseudopods. “I kinda like this, maybe I’ll have a short nap wrapped up in your arm—tentacles.”

Sighing softly, enfolded in a tentacled embrace, Vani drifted off to sleep.
Vani woke shortly before midnight, a moment of abject terror at her immobility giving way to warm contentment as her brain caught up to her body as to where she’d left it. It didn’t take much effort to free herself from Tentacles’s embrace, and the creature seemed at least half-aware of its surroundings, ‘pods and tentacles sliding away and coiling back under it as Vani extricated herself. She smiled, petting its main body before she turned off the light and headed upstairs.

Sleeping for so long, kept warm in that tentacled embrace, Vani found herself incredibly aroused —so much so that her fingers played against her labia as she climbed the stairs. Already her treacherous mind was imagining what it would be like to be filled by Tentacles’s ‘pods. Or even its ovipositor, no matter how large. Or perhaps a ‘pod in her ass, the ovipositor stretching her pussy, another ‘pod—or two, or three—in her mouth, with a tentacle doing the sucker-special against each breast. Vani shivered in forbidden delight at the thought, one finger hooking up into her vagina as her palm ground against her pubic bone.

It was really the idea of being filled and stretched that appealed to her tonight, and with that in mind she grabbed as many toys as she could carry, dragging them into the bathroom. The large tile walls were always so useful for things with suction cups. Even some of her own home-made fake cum for a couple of her more special toys. It wasn’t just flesh she was imagining being filled with. She was tempted to lock the door, to make sure Tentacles stayed out if it awoke, but something about the thrill of being caught in such an indecent act just added to her arousal.

A few moments later—one hand often straying to her pussy—and Vani was ready to go. She wanted to be left weak at the knees, fluids running out of every hole as she sprawled languorously on the floor. She almost wished she had a friend—any friend—to help putting her in some shibari just to make it even hotter. Maybe next time Tentacles could help with it. Those ‘pods were surprisingly dextrous after all.

Down on all fours, Vani backed against the dildos she’d stuck to the wall, the heights and angles just off, enough to be tantalising rather than frustrating. She reached back, guiding one of the larger dildos into her waiting—practically dripping—pussy. She forced herself against the wall, feeling the girth of the dildo through the length of her vagina. It was larger than normal, but tonight she was so horny it hardly mattered, already able to slide along its length. Slowly, mind, but she could still take the whole thing.

Hands out to her sides, as if she was practicing for press-ups, Vani lowered her lips towards the dildo she’d stuck to the floor, imagining instead the incredible smoothness of Tentacle’s ‘pods, not even a nub of a head on them. Her lips caught and sucked the head of the dildo, her tongue swirling around as she swallowed hard and sucked it in deeper, tip pressing towards her throat. She thrust hard with her hips, breathing through her nose, knowing she could still take more—wanting to take more.

She slid forward, and releasing her lips from the dildo on the floor, turned to lube a slightly slimmer, longer dildo on the wall—and then another, beneath the first, still in her pussy. This time she was gentle. She had to be. It was a long time since she’d tried to stretch herself like this, tried to be more than full in any way. She’d been comfortable with her body’s capacity. But now there was a new challenge, and while she didn’t completely embrace it, she was facing it head on.

Vani gasped as the pair of dildos entered her vagina, the distension of her labia on the cusp of true pain. She was thankful she’d used the thicker lube for this, making it just a little easier. She backed
up further, the smaller dildo now pressing insistently at her ass. Rocking her hips back, she felt the pop as that dildo pushed just past her asshole, now practically touching the upper dildo in her pussy. It took several calming breaths before she could move again, her thighs twitching and her knees almost refusing to obey. Her lips closed around the dildo on the floor again.

With a choked cross between a sigh and a gasp Vani forced her head down and her hips back, flooding her body with sensation. Her mouth was filled, the tip of that dildo almost in her throat, forcing her to fight hard against her gag reflex. Her ass was slowly being filled, forced ever so slightly outwards by the slimmer dildo. Her pussy was the seat of all that sensation, burning through her stomach and below, filling her with a desirous flame. She felt every wrinkle and contour on both of those dildos. She knew she was stretched to her limit—and perhaps beyond—but the intensity of sensation was too much to bear. She forced herself back further, her hands no longer supporting her weight.

The dildo in her mouth was practically choking her now, serving as a very effective gag. It was so hard to fight that reflex. Her right hand clawed deeply into her left breast, the stinging welts only serving to heighten the sensation between her thighs. Her left hand pressed fingers either side of the hood hiding her clit, alternately flicking over that sensitive nub. She was trying to force herself back still further, towards the wall, but a sudden spike of pain from around her labia stopped her. She let out a choked breath around the dildo filling her mouth, knowing this was as far as she was going to get with stretching herself tonight. She could still feel the dildo in her pussy rubbing against the dildo in her ass, and the dildo in her mouth was leaving her dangerously short of breath. Her fingers were already toying with her clit, and when a gentle shudder ran down her spine she knew it was too late to stop—she could already feel the contractions building. She had wanted to fight them—to edge while filled beyond her limit. But her body didn’t want that.

So instead of fighting it, she stopped, grabbing the plungers of the syringes filled with her fake cum mix. Both of them. A burst of warm, sticky fluid filled her pussy first, and then another squirt made it so slick the shuddering contractions almost forced both dildos out. Her ass gripped the smaller dildo like a vice, and with what little mind she had left, Vani squeezed the other plunger, a sticky, white mess erupting in her throat, forcing her to gag and spit it around the dildo. Her whole body shuddering, her thighs quivering, and her throat thickly coated in fake cum, Vani slid forward one last time, her whole body falling in to languor as it was emptied of the toys that had so recently filled it.

Lying on the floor, insensate from pleasure—and with a dull ache around her labia and lips—Vani felt herself temporarily drift away, runnels of white leaking down her thighs, and out the corner of her mouth, over her lips. This really was what she’d wanted, and at this point she didn’t care if she woke up later covered in her cum and surrounded by sex toys. She floated above and within herself for several blissful minutes, riding the high for as long as it could last, slowly falling to earth as a pool of white drool gathered under her cheek and leaking white fake cum and pussy juices made the floor sticky under one leg.

Still recovering, Vani crawled for the shower, just sitting under the stream as it washed her down, the evidence of her depravity gurgling thickly down the drain, the only reminder now a deep, subtle ache within her core. She blinked, realising that what she’d just done had only been about two thirds as big as that ovipositor. If they tried to soon she had a sudden feeling that one or both of them might be injured during the act. That would not be a good start.

Vani lay under the shower for another minute or so, then turned it off and dragged on a robe. Staggering tiredly back into her bedroom, she collapsed on the mattress, hair a tangled mess. She was asleep in seconds, all thoughts of tidying the bathroom or drying herself long since gone.
Downstairs, Tentacles listened to the metal tablet—laptop—that Vani so often shared with it. Right now it was studying the science of prosthetics. While the concept of technological replacements for organic systems was not uncommon, the sheer crudeness here was. Yet another thing that humans were a long way from perfecting. They had yet to surpass their biological originals in functionality, and it seemed no research had been devoted to augmentation.

When it came to repairing sensory systems, however, the humans seemed to excel with their interfacing and integration. Tentacles ardently wished that the laptop had a tactile display—it was very tempted to attempt construction of a simple prosthetic known as a hearing aid. With a touch of metaphysical power it could easily be improved and integrated as an additional sense to allow easier conversation with Vani. To create a voice—and not a toneless synthesis like the laptop—Tentacles was much less sure of which approach to take. Perhaps it would be better to concentrate merely on inputs for now.

That, of course, led to the second key challenge. Converting electrical impulses into chemical synthesis compounds. The human brain seemed to rely on highly specialised chemical receptors to create action potentials in order fire an electric charge. What was more interesting was that thoughts and memories were considered to be created by these electrical charges—not the chemical compounds used to fire them. This meant that human minds had the potential to operate much faster than Tentacles’s, but lacked the ability to be distributed throughout the body and form a gestalt.

Any potential offspring with Vani would immediately rectify that problem, along with the lack of sensory inputs. That, however, was a future problem. Right now Tentacles was still considering if extra sensory capacity could be formed ex nihilo via its magic. The possibility existed, but the probability of a successful cast was vanishingly small. It would also have to be maintained virtually indefinitely, which would be a significant drain on Tentacles’s energy reserves. There was also the chance that if the experimental casting went awry, Tentacles itself might suffer damage that could not be regenerated without the use of eldritch magic—magic that it might no longer be capable of casting.

Thus, Tentacles intended to pursue the issue in the morning, after Vani’s normal somnolence period ended. It also wished Vani had stayed longer in its embrace, her regular breathing while somnolent a soothing rhythm of expansion and contraction. Pushing itself up the stairs, Tentacles even considered applying a singular variation of the touch of comfort to connect itself with Vani while she slept, but Vani’s desire not to be touched while asleep crept into its mind and it instead contented itself with simply curling around itself on the floor next to her padded resting slab. While its body rested, it let its mind wander through the planar depths, assessing its current level of uniplanar integration.

The process was nearly complete, and Tentacles found itself satisfied with the process thus far. A distant cry touched the very edge of its consciousness, and it watched as another of its kind sailed past what remained of it beyond its current plane. No interaction was possible, and for a moment Tentacles felt a great pull to return—a feeling that abated when a loose hand fell upon its main body. Its consciousness properly gathered, Tentacles realised that Vani had shifted while asleep, her hand slipping from the edge of the rest slab, and her legs dangerously close to dragging her off completely.

Using the backs of its tentacle pads, Tentacles gently pushed Vani back towards the centre of the padded slab. She would surely understand that such a touch was only from concern for her wellbeing, nothing more. That was when it felt one of those tentacles being ensnared in Vani’s arms, held just tightly enough that removing it might awaken her. Tentacles attempted to extract
the appendage as carefully as possible, but Vani shifted again, her arms pulling closer, holding the tentacle against the strange fur-like garment she wore.

Through the garment Tentacles could feel Vani’s breathing; a soothing rhythm against the surface of its tentacle. It sorely wished Vani could be enfolded in the full touch of comfort again. It was also aware that this might be beyond the boundaries that Vani had set, but it didn’t want to disturb her period of somnolence. It had investigated sleep patterns, and found Vani to represent a typical human cycle of wakefulness and somnolence. So Tentacles stayed put, almost inert, planning what to say to Vani when she eventually awoke.

Vani yawned and stretched, her robe suddenly too warm in the morning sun streaming through the window. She threw the robe off, noting with vague interest that it never reached the floor, seeming to float awkwardly beside her bed. Several ‘pods were manipulating it, trying to figure out how it worked—or possibly what it was made from. Rising slowly, Vani padded into the bathroom to relieve herself, blinking at the mess on the floor and the dildos still stuck to the wall. She was actually kind of impressed by that, given the pounding they’d taken.

Her bladder now thankfully empty, Vani sighed and grabbed a cloth to wipe the floor with, throwing down a little cleaner first. With that done, she collected her toys and walked back in to the bedroom, for some reason happy that Tentacles didn’t have eyes. It wasn’t about being embarrassed or caught out—it was actually a vague feeling she didn’t have a name for. Not even unease, or unreadiness, but just a sense that it was very slightly too soon to openly discuss this particular aspect of her sexuality. That, of course, led her to wonder if Tentacles possessed any sort of drive for sexual contact beyond breeding or mindsharing.

Walking slowly downstairs, Tentacles following quietly behind, Vani entered the kitchen and grabbed a small tin of food for Bossco from the pantry. Her faithful companion had of course heard the sound from a mile away, sitting expectantly on the back step, tongue hanging out the side of his mouth. Vani fished his bowl out from under the small table there and dumped the contents of the tin into it. The food vanished in seconds, and the german shepherd looked expectantly up at her.

“You think I didn’t see you inhale that, buddy?”

Bossco woofed happily.

“How about going for a run?” Bossco jumped up excitedly, sprinting down the path out into the field. Vani turned to Tentacles. “You can follow us if you want, nobody’s gonna see us out here.”

Vani leapt from the porch and hit the ground running, chasing Bossco as he darted for the bushes in the distance. Vani felt the impact down her legs, the way the soft earth pressed against her feet, and the morning air almost seemed to pinch at her skin. Running wild—running naked—was an experience she cherished out in the country. It wasn’t just the freedom to do it, but the experience, the wind, her hair flying, feet pounding, heart thumping. The burst of sudden energy allowing her to nearly catch Bossco, playfully slapping his rump.

“Gotcha!”

And then Bossco surged further forwards, tail wagging, barking with excitement as he skidded around the bushes. Vani leapt and rolled over one low bush, glancing behind as she came up. Tentacles was just barely keeping pace in its roller-ball form. Bossco bounded around the bushes, darting back to growl at Tentacles as the creature approached Vani. Vani placed a hand on his shoulders, loosely gripping the scruff of his neck.
“You can’t eat Tentacles,” Vani crouched down beside Bosco to reinforce her point. “Tentacles is a friend.”

Bosco continued to growl. Vani bopped him on the nose.

“Enough, Bosco. Sit. Tentacles, get over here, I need Bosco to sniff you.”

Tentacles is unsure approaching Bosco is wise.

Vani looked at the large, ovoid creature tentatively approaching her, its ‘pods, held close around its main body. “I’ll stop him from trying to eat you again. And if he can he see you’re not a threat to me, he won’t try in the first place.”

Tentacles will trust Vani, but remains unsure.

“You know what, just hold out a tentacle for him to sniff.”

Tentacles unfurled a single tentacle to its fullest extent, placing it within what it considered easy striking range for Bosko. But the creature didn’t strike, held relatively still by Vani’s touch. The tentacle lay inert against the ground, but tensed against any sudden strike. With its echo sense Tentacles could observe Bosko crouching, inching closer, its tooth-filled mouth dangerously close. Hot, damp air washed over the back of the tentacle’s pad, but no attack came.

A sudden scratching movement and the same air—in fact, the creature’s breath, Tentacles realised—washed over the other side of the tentacle. It heard Vani encouraging the creature, and could vaguely sense that her hand moved above its head, rapidly and chaotically. Bosko sat, and Tentacles dared raise its vulnerable appendage. It immediately felt that same warm breath washing between the suckers on the pad’s underside, followed by a sudden coating of acidic moisture—not unlike what Vani’s mouth had spread over its pseudopods at the lake.

Is Bosko going to attack?

“No, he just licks things. It’s a thing that dogs do.”

Bosko is dog?

“Yeah, he’s a dog. And not a particularly smart one sometimes either. He likes ear scratches, and you might be able to give him some—wrap a couple of ‘pods around my hands again.”

Tentacles did as instructed, and followed Vani’s motion as her hands reached for Bosko’s head, behind the pointed cartilage that served as the creature’s external auditory structure. The dog—Tentacles was unsure how broadly the term could be applied in future, so relished using it now—started panting and wagging its rearmost appendage. Vani explained that it meant the dog was happy. Also that the dog liked to chase things, especially a small round object called a ‘tennis ball’.

After a few example throws, Vani handed the ball to Tentacles, who gave it an impressive swing. Bosko bolted off after it, faithfully returning it to its point of origin. Tentacles found a simple pleasure in attempts to launch the ball further and further, despite its complete lack of visual reference. It was trying to launch it far enough that Bosko would be unable to retrieve it—but every time the dog found it, and placed it in front of Tentacles. It took what seemed like a long time for the dog to come back, and then simply lie on the ground, ball still gripped between its
teeth.

“He’s worn out for now,” Vani explained when Tentacles questioned her about the unusual behaviour. “But he’ll want to play again later, I’m sure. I’ve kinda been neglecting him a bit since you showed up.”

There was a pause, Tentacles wasn’t sure how to respond.

“Oh, he’ll be fine, he’s always full of energy. Speaking of which, I need some breakfast, and to wash my feet—care to join me?”

Tentacles warmly signed an affirmative, and the pair of them headed back towards the dwelling. The dog lay in the distance, contentedly chewing on the ball as he rested. Tentacles inwardly resigned itself to the fact that the animal would be unavoidable in future—but at least it was no longer an aggressive threat. For the future, however, Vani would always be far more important, and if interacting with Bosko was required to move closer to breeding with Vani, then Tentacles would—if not happily, at least willingly—do so.
Vani at work

It was before Vani’s morning food intake, and Tentacles was helping her to wash her feet, something made far more pleasurable by the fact that Vani had a device that made warming rain, used primarily for the removal of surface contaminants from skin. The use of semi-alkaline enzymatic agents was something that could have been skipped, until Tentacles discovered that Vani simply couldn’t generate any sort of repulsion field for self-cleansing—or avoiding contamination in the first place.

Vani sat, rather than standing as she said she normally would, allowing Tentacles to both explore her body more fully, and help with the task of washing herself. From her demonstrated flexibility, Tentacles knew her to be fully capable of handling the task herself, which meant that this action was another point to reinforce their pair-bonding traits. It was stunningly difficult to generate the foamed layer of enzyme with simple pseudopod motion, and Tentacles found itself experimenting constantly with shape, texture, and motion in attempts to optimise the process.

For Vani it seemed almost obscenely easy, taking only a second or two to generate that foam, which at times, rather than applying to herself, she would smear over Tentacles’s body with a laugh, before rinsing it off with splashes of water funnelled from between her hands. That was another advantage of being immersed in the warming rain—it gave Tentacles’s echo-sense a massively improved resolution, even if it did hinder most attempts to hear Vani’s speech.

Tentacles found that Vani was far more accepting of many different kinds of touches during this routine of cleansing, only gently pushing away those that might encroach on her Vagina. She explained that she didn’t need soap—what she called the enzymatic cleaning agent—in order to clean that part of her body. She also spoke of how she enjoyed Tentacles’s roaming touch on this particular morning, but that it should not assume it would always be so. She also asked an odd question.

“Are you always gonna speak in third person?” Out of the warming rain, Vani had grabbed a larger version of the looped cloth she used to dry the dishes.

Tentacles does not understand this question.

“That’s actually exactly what I mean. You seem to understand that when I say ‘I’, it means Vani.”

Tentacles understands this concept.

“I’m guessing you didn’t study languages or grammar much on my laptop, then.” While her movements seemed too distant to follow, a subtle airflow came from Vani, and her voice shifted its origin point as she moved.

Existence of languages was known, but research beyond requirement of mutual intelligibility was deemed unnecessary.

“Next lesson then, ‘I’ generally refers to the current speaker in a conversation.”

Does this mean that if Tentacles were to consistently use ‘I’ statement, Vani would still understand this to mean Tentacles itself?

“Of course. Now I think it’s past time we should have breakfast.
Ingestions of small foodstuffs satisfies Tentacles. I would like the crunchy flakes with small fruits and protein chunks.

“Muesli.”

Yes. I would like muesli.

Vani looked down at Tentacles. It seemed strange for it to be using ‘I’—somehow the act of familiarity made it seem more alien. On a whim, Vani grabbed a silk robe as she left her room, wrapping the sash loosely around her waist. The feeling of silk sliding over her thighs as she walked, bunching ever so slightly at her hips and waist, hanging loose from her shoulders, just brushing her suddenly sensitive nipples… With a sigh of contentment, Vani headed down the stairs and prepared breakfast for the both of them. She couldn’t help but notice how Tentacles gently pulled and toyed with the hem of the robe—clearly fascinated by the texture of the new material.

Tentacles will ingest sustenance with Vani. Discussion of future plans as well?

“Sure.”

Vani pulled at the robe as she moved around the kitchen. It just felt right to be wearing the robe, the soft silk caressing her as she moved. That, and somehow splashing herself with her breakfast would be annoyingly cold. Cornflakes, milk, and some banana slices for sweetness. She made the same dish for Tentacles, though with rather less milk. Table manners were not the creature’s strong suit, but she had to admit they hadn’t always been her greatest asset either.

As they were eating in relative silence, something occurred to Vani about Tentacles’s ability to share chemical memories and other influences. “Hey, y’know how you can make chemical memories… how does that work?”

Tentacles recalls memory and packages it into engrammatic gel to facilitate absorption by receiver.

“Is it only memories and that… ‘influence’ stuff?”

Vani elaborates on context of question?

“I mean, can you only make the memory stuff to share, or could you make other chemicals too?”

Tentacles can create ink and biocompatible gel for healing injured breeders and offspring, but both require additional energy and nutrient compounds.

It took Vani a few seconds to process that, especially the second part. In her mind she saw a vast array of new activities they might share, perhaps even a little rougher than even she was used to. If the gel worked rapidly enough, of course. And ‘inks’, well, if they could be modified slightly… Vani smiled, her cheeks flushed. She’d just heard something new that Tentacles could do, and already she was thinking of sexual applications for all of it.

“I am a terrible person,” she whispered, shaking her head and grinning.

Breakfast was finished soon after, and Vani rinsed out her and Tentacles’s dishes. She needed to put in some more hours on her main commission, something else she’d been neglecting since Tentacles’s arrival. Making the rusty scales was tedious—easy, just time consuming and kind of
boring. Putting them all in place was more fun, usually just a tack with the MIG was enough. Of course, that also meant getting on some real clothes for a change. With a sigh Vani headed back upstairs, pulling on a pair of plain black briefs and black lace bra. Then just some old jeans, and a t-shirt with several holes burnt through it from grinding sparks.

Her overalls, as per normal, were in the barn. To get there she pulled on a pair of gumboots she kept at the back door, and asked Tentacles not to follow her—mostly for its own safety, really. She wasn’t too sure how it would react to the general cacophony of her workshop area. Or the heat. Not always great for her either, but the money from commissions was always good, with one exception that no longer had a gallery exhibit anymore. Vani smiled as she zipped up her overalls and pulled on her gloves and earmuffs; she was already wearing her glasses.

There were only a few scales to finish off, so Vani grabbed them in a handful and put them on the shelf next to the finisher. Tedium, yes, but she could lose herself in the flow, the pile of finished scales growing very quickly. Then it was time for the real fun, and Vani traded her glasses for a welding helmet, firing up the MIG. She glanced at the small TIG welder in the corner—difficult as it was, she enjoyed the work immensely. With a soft sigh she grabbed the first of the scales and picked up the torch.

She started from the tail, tacking the rearmost scales in place first, so that the overlap from the next set would cover the welds of the former. Just a little touch, but important to the final look of the piece. It also meant less finishing work on the rust and iron-scale effects. She moved slowly, methodically, holding a scale in place, tacking it down with its neighbours, then finished with a quick stitch-weld. In the corner of the barn, set up earlier that day, her camera was taking time-lapse pictures of the process. Her clients—the bigger ones especially—loved to see progress like that. She liked it too.

The crackling fizz of the MIG welder had filled the barn for at least four hours, and Vani now lay on the dirt, spread-eagled, her visor flipped up as she looked at the belly of the beast. She blinked away a bit of fading arc-flash—and the sun streaming in through a gap in the woodwork—and wormed her way out from under the thing. It was looking a lot more like a dragon now. Levering herself from the ground there were the usual aches from being stuck in awkward positions for too long. She stood with a quiet groan, turning off the camera and taking out the memory card. She threw off her overalls on her way out.

Back in the house, Vani gently took the laptop from Tentacles, attempting to answer questions about pronoun use that she hadn’t really considered since high-school—if at all. While she waited for the time-lapse to finish uploading, she continued talking with Tentacles, and together they helped expand the creature’s vocabulary with as many possibly useful phrases as possible, and the appropriate contexts for them. It was a lesson, of sorts, and it took nearly two hours, at the end of which Vani was achingly hungry.

She started with a chocolate bar, and then some mixed nuts as she prepared a large bowl of microwave pasta. White sauce, and a few minutes frying some chicken. Heavy for lunch, but light for dinner. It was also nearly four in the afternoon. Vani offered some to Tentacles, but it refused, saying it currently had no need of extra energy. Considering the time, Vani knew she still had to get at least another few hours in on her commission to catch up, and play with Bossco, and prepare a late dinner, and then maybe catch up on some TV, or talk with some old friends online—if they were still up. The timezone difference always confused her.

Cleaning her dishes in the sink, Vani left the house smiling, dashing back quickly to collect the memory card for the camera. The barn still smelled slightly of welding fumes, but to Vani it was a welcoming scent. Donning her overalls again, Vani set to work, welding up the scales from the
belly to the throat of the dragon. As she worked her mind sank into the most satisfying flow-state, unable to mark the passing of time for the concentration her work was taking. She straightened slightly, noticing it was dark outside—she couldn’t remember when she’d turned on the worklight in the barn.

It was also raining softly, the pattering just audible against the roof and walls. Just outside the side door she could hear Bosco’s contented snores. He perked right up when she opened the door, jumping at her exuberantly.

“Down. Down, you idiot.”

Bosco woofed happily.

“Yes, yes, I’m happy to see you too. Down!” Vani held him at the shoulder. “Play, or dinner?”

Bosco shot off towards the house.

“Well, that answers that,” Vani rolled her eyes and started walking, memory card in her overall pocket. They needed a wash anyway.

She ducked inside and grabbed a slice of dog roll for Bosco, putting in his dish, then put in a handful of biscuits. Both disappeared almost instantly. She stared at him disapprovingly.

“Are you a dog or a vacuum cleaner?”

All she got in reply was a happy bark. After stepping back to place the memory card in the reader, Vani stripped off and headed back outside. Rain this light… she loved the feeling of the raindrops striking her skin. She shivered in delight—and a little at the chill—as the tiny droplets ran down her body. Over her breasts. Down her back. Across her stomach. Arms. Down her thighs. The rain didn’t care where it touched her; where those droplets caressed her skin. After a while she retreated to the deck, rinsing her feet with the tap for the hose. It was time to make a very late dinner.
Vani lay propped up by a pillow she’d folded in half, thinking about her distant friends. She’d talked with Cora some time ago—just talk, catching up on each other’s lives. Cora still teased her about not being able to settle down. Vani teased her about her lacking a sense of real adventure. They also spoke about how neither of them had heard from Bryce in several months. Vani wanted to visit them—both of them, if they could manage to track down Bryce—but wondered about leaving Tentacles alone.

To that end she was talking with Tentacles in the light from her bedside lamp. She had explained about masturbation, and the concept of mutual pleasure—and it was about that point that both she and Tentacles realised she couldn’t really give a demonstration for Tentacles without it actively participating.

“I’m really not sure how to go on,” Vani admitted.

I understand this confusion. Vani’s sensory precepts differ so massively from Tentacles’s that this forms another unforeseen barrier to future breeding.

Vani frowned, trying to phrase her answer correctly. “Not a… barrier. A… umm… a challenge. Something we can overcome together.”

Mutual problem solving is very acceptable. Tentacles asks how to proceed?

“I guess… slowly,” Vani shrugged. “Maybe I’ll just touch myself while you wrap a ‘pod or two around me?”

Vani seems confused by her intentions.

“Just unsure is all. After all, it’s not like I’ve ever tried anything like this before.”

Tentacles would remind Vani that ve has not tried it either.

“Wait, did you just call yourself ‘ve’?”

Is this not acceptable? Tentacles studied pronouns extensively, and searched for agender pronouns suitable to vis/its unique physique and psychology.

Vani laughed softly. “No, no, it’s perfectly acceptable. You just caught me off-guard using it properly like that.”

Tentacles finds verself pleased by this. Does Vani still wish to proceed with this self-contact experiment?

“Maybe… maybe just get up here on the bed first and we can explore together.”

Sending two tentacles over the cushioned slab, and four pseudopods to assist by pushing against the floor, Tentacles hauled itself up next to Vani, aligning its various appendages so they draped conveniently back towards the floor. Ve felt it as Vani took hold of a pseudopod, gently wrapping it around her arm and over her hand. Tentacles spread the tip of the pseudopod out over the back of Vani’s hand, gently coiling another around her arm to slide between her fingers.
Vani moved slowly, deliberately, her two leading fingers first pressing into the smooth skin of her abdomen before lifting away from contact. She explained the action as a ‘stroking’. Tentacles felt a subtly different movement, Vani’s fingertips describing a rough semi-circle of approximately the same length as a stroke. This motion she called a swirl. Then with her leading finger and thumb she pressed firmly into the flesh at her waist, bringing the tip of finger and thumb together as much as possible. That was a pinch, and at this point she warned Tentacles to be careful, because pinches could also cause pain if done too strongly, or in the wrong place.

Tentacles felt it as Vani shifted, leaning closer, pressing her lips into ver body. A kiss. Ripples of a strange disquiet echoed throughout ver mind as Tentacles realised that this was an action ve could not replicate. It was enough to give it pause to ask about the significance of a kiss—and from Vani’s explanation it appeared to be a rough physical analogy for mind-sharing. Nowhere near as many channels, nor a connection so deep, but enough that it remained vitally important to human rituals of pair bonding and preparation for breeding.

Vani gently drummed on ver, and Tentacles placed an extra pseudopod at her shoulder and brushed it down her arm. Vani took that pseudopod in both hands, kissing the flaps on the tip. Then she swept her tongue along a short length of the pseudopod. Licking. Tentacles knew most of these actions, of course, but it also realised that Vani was building a sort of vocabulary that they could both use. A place on their bodies, and an action. It could be a question or an instruction. Even a demand.

Tentacles was brought swiftly back to reality as Vani’s lips closed around the entire end of its pseudopod, the inside of her mouth creating a mildly pleasing vacuum effect. Sucking. Calcified blades very gently sank into ver flesh, and for an instant grave misgivings filled ver. But those blades—teeth—did nothing more than press against ver flesh. A bite, or nibble—but this kind, so dangerous and gentle, was restricted to sexual expression.

Then Vani asked Tentacles to try each of the actions on her. Ve obliged, starting with the stroke, gently brushing the tips of two pseudopods across Vani’s belly. Four more pseudopods had begun slowly wrapping themselves around Vani’s torso, and beneath them ve could feel a slight shiver, and a strange localised deformation of her skin. Many slightly raised points, with hairs attempting to stand upright. Tentacles didn’t understand the response, but as Vani did not seem to mind, ve continued.

This time ve used a single pseudopod to perform the swirl, tracing a semicircle around Vani’s navel—then ve got adventurous. All six free pseudopods arced up and descended towards Vani’s stomach, thighs, and breasts. A single tip touched each breast and thigh, and one brushed either side of Vani’s stomach, just below her ribs. She said nothing, but Tentacles noticed how much her breathing had slowed. Lifting those same pseudopods away, ve asked if Vani wished to allow ver to experiment with these touches.

“I wanted to—I want to,” Vani’s voice was soft. “Why did you stop?”

Because Vani’s breathing changed, slowed. Tentacles was concerned this was mild fear response.

“Well, uh, thanks for being concerned,” Tentacles couldn’t see Vani’s wry smile, but ve could sense the slight frustration in her voice. Vani continued. “Experiment, if you like—be firm; be gentle; touch different places; ask if you’re not sure; maybe even do that thing with your suckers that’s really kinda ticklish. If you go too far I’ll tell you.”

Once again Tentacles raised ver pseudopods, then very slowly lowered two of them to touch
Vani’s stomach, just below her ribs. Those pseudopods gently stroked against soft, warm flesh, following subtle contours around Vani’s stomach and navel. Occasionally one of those pseudopods would swirl. One of the pseudopods touching Vani’s thigh opened its flaps, attempting to pinch, but couldn’t quite seem to gain purchase, more like gentle sucking than anything else. Ve tried using two pseudopods, tapering the ends, and with just a little effort ve managed to get the pressure right, eliciting a soft exhalation from Vani.

Stroking and swirling around Vani’s stomach, and slowly pinching odd points on her thighs, Tentacles pressed a pseudopod into the supple, sensitive skin of Vani’s breast, firmly enough to leave something of a dent. A new idea quickly forming, ve coiled a pseudopod around the entirety of Vani’s right breast, drawing it tight, hoping it was not too uncomfortable for her. The flaps opened on the tip of another pseudopod—ve had remembered Vani talking about her nipples being more sensitive than the rest of her breasts, and also using a pseudopod’s flaps to suckle a small toe. Those flaps now pinched against Vani’s right nipple, and drew a sharp breath from her, a shiver running down her body.

“A… a little… much…” Vani panted.

Tentacles withdrew the pseudopod from Vani’s nipple, and loosened the constriction from around her breast.

“Better,” Vani sighed in relief. “It’s… intense, and maybe—no, definitely—another time, just not now.”

Growing more confident, Tentacles drew away ver pseudopods, then began enshrouding Vani in as much of the touch of comfort as ve could reasonably manage while leaving ver enough length to play with at least half of ver pseudopods. Ver tentacles, meanwhile, had been placed very strategically over Vani’s breasts and the outside of her buttocks, the two on her breasts rippling suckers against flesh in slow moving waves. Those pseudopods were carefully stroking, pinching, or swirling around any exposed flesh on Vani’s body, and from the subtle shivers and slightly unsteady breathing ve could detect, Tentacles considered that ve was doing a good job.

“How…” Vani spasmed for an instant, interrupting herself. “How thin can you make your ‘pods?”

Tentacles couldn’t really reply in that moment, all ver pseudopods being busy with attempting to explore, press into, pinch, or stroke as much of Vani as was inhumanly possible. It could, however, demonstrate. The pseudopod covering Vani’s right hand spread and flattened, curling back up over her fingertips, attempting to flow into the spaces between her fingers with some difficulty. Even ver malleable skin had its limits.

Vani seemed to find this acceptable, her hand moving slowly, fingers distressing the skin of the pseudopod as they swept against her labia with all the weight of a feather. Then her thumb pressed against her clit, and it seemed as if her breathing had stopped. It had. Tentacles eased any constriction ve might be causing around her chest. Another touch swept swiftly across Vani’s clit, a third, in yet another direction. Tentacles felt her exhale.

“Wow…” she seemed quite surprised. “Is there something on your skin?”

Tentacles wished it had enough pseudopods free to reply. It had thought of a perfect humourous rejoinder: Yes, a Vani.

“Wait, you don’t have to answer. I like this. Just… stay like this for a while, okay?”
Tentacles gave Vani a gentle squeeze with every appendage. It was an excellent approximation of something far more than a hug. Vani seemed to appreciate the movement, and Tentacles filed it away for later reference. Vani’s hand, still wrapped in extremely attenuated pseudopodal skin, was toying idly with her labia, occasionally sliding a finger into her vagina. Sometimes two fingers, in fact. Her free hand—the one not covered in pseudopod—was splaying her labia apart.

A sudden flash of inspiration struck ver, and Tentacles placed a tentacle from one of Vani’s buttocks atop her labia, point just touching her clit. Ve could feel Vani’s sudden and very firm grip against that tentacle. Then ve rippled the suckers, and Vani’s entire body convulsed, as if attempting to break free. Her breath was nothing but ragged pants.


Vani continued to push her fingers into her vagina, and suddenly the whole configuration of her hand changed, from a hook to a spear shape. Tentacles could feel the rugose inner flesh of Vani’s vagina constricting against the smoothness of its pseudopod. Those internal muscular bands were powerful. A sudden contraction paradoxically made Vani move her arm more quickly, a layer of warm biological fluid lubricating and assisting the movement.

A massive spasm rocked Vani’s body, and forced the muscles in her vagina to constrict even more heavily for a painful instant. Vani fell back heavily, cushioned somewhat by the bed of pseudopods on which she lay. With a sigh she withdrew her hand. She cursed, asking Tentacles to let her go. Ve did so. At that point ve also noticed the slightly metallic flavour of the biological fluid covering ver pseudopod.

Has Tentacles injured Vani?

“No,” Vani’s voice was matter of fact. “It’s normal.”

“It’s normal for Vani to bleed after this act?”

“It’s called masturbation, or self-pleasure. And no; but bleeding like this regularly happens to women. Most people call them periods—explains why I was horny as fuck the other day too—and mine’s always been a little irregular. It’s… well it means my body is getting ready to possibly make a baby.”

Vani has oestrus cycle for breeding?

“We—I mean people, usually call it menstruation, but that might just be a name thing.”

Tentacles understands differentiation. Does this cycle mean Vani is ready to breed?

“What? No.” The vehemence in Vani’s reply surprised Tentacles enough that it lowered the pseudopods it was using to talk, carefully considering its next question.

Rephrasing: Does this cycle mean Vani’s body is ready to begin breeding?

“It does…” Vani’s answer was slower than usual, the tone only slightly veiling the edge of anger.

Tentacles acknowledges that Vani is not yet ready to breed. This question was from biological curiosity. Tentacles did not mean to imply that ve wished to breed immediately. Ve has not gained enough trust or performed significant pair-bonding activity to allow this.
“You really are a silver tongued little monster,” Vani sighed as she finished. “And that tongue is something you could try using next time—or even your beak, if you’re really careful. That won’t be for a few days though, until the bleeding stops.”

Vani is not at risk from bleeding?

“No. I’ll be fine. Well, maybe a bit cranky, and probably a bit sore, but otherwise I’ll be fine,” Vani stood, heading for the bathroom. “Come on, let’s wash that blood off your ‘pod. I’ll try and explain a bit more about masturbation while we’re at it too.”
Quiet Moments

It hadn’t been anywhere near as bad as usual this time. Not that it always terrible, Vani admitted to herself, more just dammably uncomfortable. That, and the fact she more often had to wear actual clothing around the place. But it turned out that Tentacles’s ability to create those so called ‘healing gels’ wasn’t just limited to external use. Ve was able to make a decent painkiller as well. Maybe not tylenol, but it had a similar effect. She was still getting used to Tentacles’s pronouns though, given that ve had basically created them on its own.

Some gentle massage—touch of comfort, as Tentacles called it—had also helped rather more than Vani thought it would. Now that her period was over and she was feeling a little more even, it was time to change the sheets and as good a time as any freshen up a few other things. Right now, however, she was sprawled on the couch, enjoying the sound of rain against the roof, and not quite so enjoying the weight of Bosco in her lap.

She scratched the dog behind his ears, lamenting the situation. “You’re heavy, you know that?”

He woofed, rolling over, inviting her to rub his belly.

“Okay, fine, have some bellyrubs. Yes, you like the bellyrubs, don’t you?”

Bosco’s response was twitching his back leg and blobbing out even more.

“I have stuff to do, you know…”

A pair of tentacles sidled around, sliding under the dog. Vani smiled, letting go of Bosco. He yelped as the tentacles lifted him bodily from the couch. He landed softly, trotting over to headbutt Tentacles. ‘pods moved to push him away, and he saw his chance. Vani laughed as Bosco capsized on top of several ‘pods, doing the puppy roll and pinning those limbs to the ground.

Vani helps?

“You got yourself into this,” Vani rose from the couch, one hand patting Bosco, the other stroking Tentacles’s top surface. “You can figure out your way out of it. No biting. That goes for you too, Bosco.”

Bosco woofed happily, rolling around to pin more ‘pods.

Vani laughed as she headed for the stairs, stripping off her shirt as she did so, wadding it into a tight ball. It sailed cleanly over her bed, off the back wall, and off the edge of the laundry hamper. Muttering in annoyance, Vani hooked the shirt up with her foot and dropped it properly into the hamper. Next it was time for the bed. Pillowcases first, then the light duvet on top of everything. The pillowcases went into the hamper, while the duvet was shoved roughly into a corner along with the pillows.

The sheets came off with little effort, but Vani still took a moment to roughly fold them so they’d fit into the hamper better. Before grabbing any fresh sheets, Vani threw herself onto the bare mattress, enjoying the bounce. Her left hand traced the line between her labia over her briefs, her right gently pinched her left nipple. She sighed softly, moving around to get comfortable. A few minutes wouldn’t hurt… and would frustrate her for later. Always fun. Her hands roamed, but never ducked under the waistband of her briefs. Everything outside, filtered—dulled—by the
fabric. Enough to be arousing, but not stimulating. Enough to tease, but not to please. Vani ground the heel of her hand against her pubic bone in frustration, then rolled from the mattress, standing quickly.

The sheets were in the cupboard in the hall, and moving into late spring it was definitely time for lighter sheets. She was still going to keep the duvet though—it was just hard to sleep without a little weight on top of her. That was another thing Tentacles might help with, in future. Vani moved at a leisurely pace, flicking out the under-blanket across her mattress, smoothing down the sides. Setting the bottom sheet out she got to thinking about how quickly Tentacles might complete a task like this, given ver additional limbs and greater reach. Very quickly, most likely.

And just thinking of Tentacles, Vani was going through ideas about deepening their connection. Even so far as to include sex of some kind. Not immediately, and not that she hadn’t been considering it before, but now she was giving it serious thought. Very serious thought, given her left hand was now surreptitiously rubbing at her clit through the fabric of her briefs. There were other things they could do, and given the fuzz she could feel on her thighs and pubis, shaving was one of them.

So was some sort of attempt at mindsharing, or at least some careful experimentation with Tentacles’s mind influencing chemicals. I wonder how strong they really are? It wasn’t really a fantasy of hers, but, if it was safe, Vani saw several ways they might include it in their play sessions. Vani smiled, thinking about play, and seeing her duvet in the corner. Plenty of cushions on the seats in the living room, and as she was going to wash the sheets anyway…

While Vani was upstairs, Tentacles had been engaging in physical activity with Bosko for some time before the dog suddenly ran off. Ve paid it no mind—easier to do now that the animal was unlikely to attack except in mock-hunting activity. For some time Tentacles had been considering ver place in the relationship ve shared with Vani. To ver mind their relationship had been progressing well, improving rapport such that Vani had included ver in a sexual activity. Vani also seemed to appreciate a firmer—almost palpitating—touch of comfort around her abdomen recently. Vani had stated that this was from cramps caused by her menstruation. Certain chemical analgesics and anti-inflammatory compounds had helped relieve the most serious symptoms.

For now, Tentacles was content, almost happy that ver direct actions had relieved some of Vani’s pain. Is this an effect of pair bonding? The thought struck ver like a blow, stilling all ver pseudopods and tentacles in their idle swaying. Ve had felt such things before, of course, from mindsharing—but to have it induced by rapport and psychology? It was a truly fascinating development. The feeling was understandably weak, but it was there and easily recognised. Studying—and bonding with—Vani, even as a single subject, was surprisingly revelatory at times.

Climbing—or rather roll-shifting—up the stairs, Tentacles sought Vani to discuss this latest revelation. Ve could hear Vani’s soft footsteps approaching, and ver echo-sense showed Vani cradling a convoluted sphere of soft materials. Vani stopped just short of Tentacles’s perimeter. Tentacles held up a pseudopod in a questioning glyph.

“You’re in the way, I was heading downstairs.”

Tentacles apologises. I was looking for you.

“I wasn’t lost,” Vani laughed softly. Tentacles didn’t understand the humour. “Come on, downstairs. We’re gonna make a blanket fort.”

Vani has served as a siege engineer; military?
The sphere of soft material fell on top of Tentacles as Vani exploded with laughter. Tentacles struggled to remove the sphere as it broke down into smaller and smaller components, finally realising that these components were of a similar texture to the coverings on Vani’s rest cushion—*mattress*. Vani calls it a *mattress*. These are blankets. Tentacles was glad he had remembered the terms—but it still left the question of how Vani might turn such soft materials into a realistic defensive bastion.

Gathering the blankets into a rough sphere once more, Tentacles passed them to Vani as they continued down the stairs.

“Blanket forts aren’t anything military,” Vani spoke, amusement shading her voice. “They’re something kids build—children. I was a kid once.”

Vani has completed metamorphosis?

“You did study human growth and aging, right?”

Humour is difficult to execute. Concept is seemingly simple. Language words have many meanings.

“You need to work on your material.”

But Vani is carrying all material today.

Vani laughed, putting the blankets on the couch. “Okay, that was good.”

Vani appreciates situation based humour?

“Yeah. And slapstick.”

Slapping of sticks?

“Well, maybe in caveman times. People messing up, falling over, schemes backfiring. As long as they weren’t injured. Damn, I wish you could see, I could show you Buster Keaton’s stuff.”

Tentacles continues to acknowledge this difficulty in mutual understanding. Frustration and acceptance. Vani’s planet not yet advanced in prosthetics for augmentation.

“Wait… you mean you could… if our technology was better… and… wait—our brains use electrical signals. You use chemicals. How would that even work?”

I am unsure, Vani. It would require much experimentation on Tentacles’s part.

“I mean, it’s not like you can just grow an eyeball.”

Tentacles considered the idea, the complexity of the visual input organs used by many species on this planet. It was not a simple task. It might not even be possible, but it offered a smarter alternative than magic—for now. Even if it was possible, that still left the problem of signal conversion from electrical to chemical, and given that Vani’s temporal resolution for vision was finer than ver own with regard to tactile sensation, it might even be that that electrical signalling was the key missing from its own evolution.
Vani crouched, frowning, stroking Tentacles’s upper surface. “Hey, you okay?”

Tentacles is processing data. Concept of eyeball growth is not considered impossible, but many difficulties arise with input integration and comprehension.

“Oh, so it’s damn hard,” Vani sighed softly. “I meant it as a joke, you know?”

I did not. Possibility seemed intriguing. We have strayed from task of material fortress construction.

“A little diversion is fine,” Vani laughed, sitting cross legged on the floor, dragging a cushion off the couch. “It’s not like we’re on a schedule or anything.”

Vani dragged another cushion out, then stood to drape one of the blankets over the back of the couch, hem touching the floor. If she sat back against the couch the blanket was just long enough to cover her face, making her sneeze. Shuffling one of the smaller armchairs around she draped a blanket between it and the cushions she’d liberated earlier. Another blanket covered from that to a small ottoman—usually jammed in the corner for Bosco to worry at. Also, lifting the lid, filled with some old porn mags, a half-empty box of cigarettes, and an empty lighter.

She tried to think of the last time she’d had Nigel over—and couldn’t. Far too long ago. And for all his tattoos and piercings he’d been really vanilla. Quite disappointing, though he’d indulged her passions once or twice in an attempt at deeper intimacy. Shaking her head, Vani smiled at the memory. Maybe it was fitting that this stuff was forgotten inside a piece of old furniture.

It didn’t take long to finish the blanket fort, Vani just able to sit up inside, and shuffle around past the cushions. She dragged Tentacles inside and dropped the blanket door down behind ver. The only noise now was her own breathing—the light rain having stopped some time earlier. Resting with her back against the couch, Vani encouraged Tentacles to rest beside her. Ve obliged, one ‘pod wrapping lazily around Vani’s leg, trailing down her thigh and around her calf, gently pressing into the sole of her foot. She found her own arm wrapping around Tentacles’s body, and that she was leaning in to ver more than she was leaning against the couch.

Shifting somewhat awkwardly, Vani pressed her lips against Tentacles’s body; a soft kiss. She sat up slowly, nestling into ver side.

“This is nice.”

Tentacles finds verself content.

Vani smiled warmly as the lone ‘pod gave her leg a gentle squeeze. It was enough. For now, it was enough just to sit there, drifting into a warm quiescence.
The shower rained down upon them both, Vani sitting with her back against the wall of the shower. Tentacles rested ver main body between Vani’s ankles, pseudopods and tentacles shifting slowly in the streaming water. Vani had explained ‘shaving’ earlier in the day, a specific act of grooming unique to humans, and practised by both males and females—though each gender had a tendency to shave different areas of bodily hair. It was also, Vani had explained, optional. There were plenty of men and women who chose not to shave.

Vani had also demonstrated correct shaving technique with the enclosed blade-holder she used, obviously optimised for the human hand, but a pseudopod and a tentacle did the trick. With the suckers on ver tentacles, Tentacles stretched and smoothed the skin of Vani’s pubis, then drew the blade-holder gently away from the midline. Another pseudopod splashed more of the warming rain from the shower over the area.

Tentacles felt it as Vani shook her head, taking the blade-holder in her own hands.

“You have to be firm, like I showed you. You won’t cut the hair otherwise, see.”

Tentacles would remind Vani that ver lack of eyes remains problematic.

“Sure, but you can feel a lot—I don’t know, finer?—than I can. Surely that’s enough to tell you how hard you should be pressing.”

I am concerned about the cutting you explained earlier.

Tentacles felt a hand reach out to stroke down ver side. “Don’t be. I’ve cut myself shaving in the past. It stings, but it heals.”

Tentacles tried again, pressing the blade-holder more firmly into the flesh covering Vani’s pubis, then drew it back, blades perpendicular to the direction of motion. Ve could almost feel the bump of each hair as it first resisted the cutting action of the blades. Another pseudopod inspected the area, finding the remaining length of hair almost sharp, and somewhat uncomfortable. A second pass with the blade-holder reduced that length to a protrusion barely longer than its follicle. The demarcation between that shaved hair and the normally soft curls of Vani’s pubic hair was markedly sharp. Ve asked about it, and Vani explained that the effect was entirely intentional, and partly for visual stimulation of another.

As Tentacles finished shaving her landing strip, Vani stood, letting the water wash down her stomach, feeling the rivulets flow around and over her breasts. She had to admit that she was more than a little turned on right now. Tentacles was now shaving her legs, the smooth glide of the razor reminding her that any sudden movements would be a bad idea. The tiny snag of the occasional hair that was fraction too long wasn’t unexpected either. And Tentacles was being so tender—or possibly thorough—with two ‘pods trailing behind the razor, smoothing her skin.

But when it came time to shave the area around her vagina—her vulva—Vani was rather more tentative. She had confidence enough that Tentacles could manage the task without incident. She even trusted ver enough to let ver help the last time she’d masturbated. The doubt still nagged at her, and Vani just didn’t know why. There wasn’t a rational explanation. But sometimes that was okay; sometimes feeling could trump reason. Her willingness to try and befriend Tentacles instead of reporting ver to… someone—that had to be a prime example.
With resigned sigh, Vani stopped Tentacles, taking the razor for herself.

Tentacles has done something wrong?

“No, I just feel kinda strange.”

Vani suffers mind-state confusion again?

“No, not really,” Vani shook her head. “I can’t quite explain it—but you haven’t done anything wrong.”

Would Vani prefer if Tentacles removed ver presence?

“No,” Vani smiled, patting Tentacles’s body. “I just feel weird.”

Vani is under warming rain with tentacled creature of extraplanar origin. Perhaps weird is correct feeling?

Laughing, Vani stood right under the shower head, razor poised to remove the short growth around her labia. The shower helped in washing the hair right away, and as she leaned back to help it, she asked herself a simple question: *Have I let anyone else shave me there?* And the answer, to her, somehow, was surprising.

*No.*

She hadn’t let anyone else shave her there, ever. And an idea started to form that maybe this was just because she liked doing it herself. Nothing about trust, or skill, or anything; just self-interest and self-satisfaction, and maybe a desire not to give that up. Or maybe, weirdly, it was jealousy. Vani really wasn’t sure, mulling it over as she finished shaving, rinsing away all the cut hairs. It was then that she had the idea. They had been experimenting more recently, and Tentacles did seem quite strong from their physical interaction.

“Hey, how much do you think you can lift?”

In human measures—Tentacles thinks ve could lift a tonne, possibly more. Tentacles are stronger than pseudopods in this case.

“So you wouldn’t have any trouble holding me up then, would you?”

Does Vani wish for elevation?

“Sort of, and I need to explain about safe-words too—and BDSM in general. It’s not something most normal people like.”

Vani is considered to have deviancy from human norms?

Vani laughed. “You could say that.”

Understanding. How does Vani wish to be elevated?

“I guess start with the touch of comfort,” Vani reached out to turn off the shower. “I’ll turn off the shower first though, no need to waste water. Hmm… is it okay if I sit on top of you to start?”
Tentacles sees no problems.

Sitting slowly, Vani found the smooth flesh strangely slick under her backside, almost as if she was at risk of sliding off. And yet, somehow, skin-to-skin, there was enough friction she didn’t slip. She couldn’t quite relax fully, however—there remained that feeling that if she did, she would slip. The feeling passed as she felt herself being enfolded once again. Two ‘pods to each leg, one coiling around her foot, climbing slowly up her shin to stop below her knee. The other lying over that, gently squeezing her thigh, placing some of its length in the crease between her thigh and labia. Tentacles was pushing boundaries, but carefully.

Two ‘pods wrapped around each arm, one from elbow to wrist, the end splaying out to cover her palm. The other ‘pod wrapped her upper arm, around her shoulder and across her back before very gently coiling at her throat. Vani felt her breath hitch, even knowing how careful and respectful—and gentle—Tentacles could be, a feeling of utter vulnerability remained. As her breathing slowed, so did Tentacles.

I am slowing, because Vani’s breathing has changed again. Is this desirable?

“Yes,” Vani nodded firmly to reinforce the point, the ‘pods pressing softly into her throat as she did so. “I feel pretty vulnerable with those ‘pods around my throat.”

What is vulnerable? This is undesirable feeling?

“Not normally, no,” shaking her head, Vani felt her breath catch again. “It means I feel like I might be hurt, and hurt badly, even by someone or something I care about.”

What is causing Vani to feel vulnerable? Do you want to stop it?

“Your ‘pods around my neck. If I stop breathing for long enough, I could die. If your ‘pods got tight somehow, and didn’t get undone. It’s weird, I know you don’t want to hurt me, and would not do so deliberately, but there is a nagging doubt in the back of my mind. I can’t define it, or what causes it.”

Vani’s mind-states remain curious. But you did not answer if you wanted Tentacles to move ver pseudopods away.

“Because I’m still thinking. I feel vulnerable—and a little scared—but I’m not sure it’s bad,” Vani smiled, shaking her head. “Not with what I’m going to ask you to do next, anyway.”

This notion is curious. Most sapients avoid situations of possible harm at all costs. Some will save offspring when threatened, but many avoid all dangers. Why does Vani desire fear of harm causing?

“It’s…” Vani trailed off, thinking. “It’s kinda hard to explain, really. Something like giving up power, but still being in control of the situation. There’s also adrenaline, and other sense being heightened. There’s more, a lot more. And another thing is I’d only ever do this with someone I trust, and someone I know that cares.”

Is this normal pair-bonding behaviour?

“It’s not considered normal to most, but I think we can call it a bonding experience—or bondage.”
Tentacles does not understand.

“Humour, maybe because I still feel a little nervous.”

Tentacles re-iterates offer to reposition pseudopods.

“No, I’ll be okay. But you might find the next part a little weird.”

Lifting Vani was easy, and Tentacles did so as she explained what she wanted. Tentacles was concerned about the idea of deliberately harming Vani—afraid that it might damage their rapport, even if Vani requested it. Then Vani explained to ver the concept of ‘safe-words’. A pair of special words, one meaning to slow down or ease off, and the other meaning to stop immediately. The explanation continued that these words were necessary because Vani might protest or make sounds of pain when in fact she still desired the current situation. Tentacles was still confused to some degree. *Why would Vani desire harm to herself?*

Tentacles began slowly constricting ver pseudopods, leaving those around Vani’s neck and upper arms alone. As ver muscles contracted ve could feel the smoothness of Vani’s freshly shaved skin, and the very slight puckering of hair follicles if ve really concentrated. Ver tentacles coiled around Vani’s waist, and one sucker pad covered the underside of each of Vani’s breasts. Ve could feel Vani’s slight, convulsive gasp as ve gripped with those suckers and began to pull. Ver other tentacle pads covered the sides of Vani’s buttocks, and ve began to pull with those as well.

Vani writhed and groaned, but did not use the safe-words. Tentacles was somewhat concerned—surely the discomfort was now undesirable.

“Harder,” Vani commanded.

Tentacles began to pull with ver pseudopods, and now ve could feel it as Vani’s muscles began to strain against the force being applied. Ve could even just feel the unsettling sensation of bones beginning to grind against each other. Vani writhed again, and made strange exhalations, but still did not use the safe-words. Tentacles decided to experiment, knowing roughly what Vani’s body’s range of motion was. Ve started by driving Vani’s legs apart, feeling her powerful thigh muscles actively fighting the effort. The strength there was impressive, but could be overcome with a little effort. Ve kept forcing Vani’s legs further and further apart.

“Argh… *heimdall.*” Vani used the slowing down word. “Any… ugh… any further and… my legs might… ow… break.”

Does Vani wish this to stop?

“No, just…” and here Vani broke into ragged series of gasps. “No more… on… my legs…”

Tentacles felt it as Vani tried to writhe, and couldn’t, her upper body exerting little force against the tentacles holding her in place. Knowing Vani’s arms had a much greater range of motion than her legs, Tentacles instead used ver pseudopods to draw Vani’s arms down and back, elbows locked.

“*Heimdall.*” It came through a sharp gasp. “Go… go back.”

Tentacles reversed the path of Vani’s arms.

“Stop, right there.” Vani’s breathing had evened out. “It hurts… but… I can… handle it. Mostly.”
Vani enjoys feeling of painfulness?

“Yeah… sometimes,” Vani swallowed, every muscle tense and trying escape. “It makes ever…

everything… sharper. God, I feel… so wet.”

Warming rain has stopped. Why does Vani feel wet?

“Touch my vagina.”

Tentacles used one of ver free pseudopods and gently ran it down the external length of Vani’s

vagina. The pseudopod came away covered in a thin, biological film with surprising lubricative

properties. Ve rubbed the pseudopod against another, noting the decrease in friction and increase

in warmth from the fluid film.

What does wetness signify?

“That my body… wants… to have sex. That… maybe I… want to as… well.”

Vani wishes to perform breeding?

“No.” And just to be sure, Vani used the stopping word. “Flugen; on… the breeding.”

Tentacles understands.

“Now, I want… no, do you… want to… play with my… vagina, now?” Vani’s breathing was

suddenly very ragged. “Or after… when we… when we… recover?”

Choice is understood. If now, and if Tentacles chooses after?

“Now, you cou— ow… could be… rough. Violent. After you would… have to… gentle. You…

very gentle.”

Tentacles considered the choice carefully. Ve thought it would be much easier to be gentle to Vani

than to be violent to her.

I choose after; to be gentle to Vani.

“Then… heimdall; loosen off.”

Vani felt her muscles begin to relax as the ‘pods and tentacles slowly crushing and stretching her

released their iron grip. There would be bruises, probably, and sore joints. But she hadn’t yet been

pushed past her limit. She wanted that feeling, being right on the edge of losing control. But she

also knew how careful she had to be. Breath play was still too dangerous for now. But more…

just a little more past her body’s limits. That she could do.

“Okay, now I know this might make you uncomfortable, but the next goal is to actually hurt me.

Not injure me permanently, but hurt to last a little while. I want you to do what you were doing

before, and go further. I want you to make me scream, or cry. Only then do you stop. Or if I say

‘flugen’ again. Then you have to carry me to the bed, Okay?”

Tentacles understands.
“Go!”

Vani felt the sudden sense of exposure as her legs were slammed open, the force enough to make her thighs and pelvis ache. Her arms were pulled down, almost hard enough to dislocate them. ‘pods and tentacles worked to arch her back painfully around Tentacles’s body. Her wrists burned at the constriction. Her breasts ached at the force being used by those suckers. The strength pulling at her backside, opening her out, left her feeling incredibly vulnerable. Tentacles pulled and twisted just a little further. Vani felt her calves strain and cramp, and the pain shot straight through her.

She screamed.

The release was instant, but the descent felt like it took several very painful seconds. She felt an odd sense of weightlessness as Tentacles carried her to the bed, depositing her with utmost care on top of the duvet. Breathing slowly, taking in great gasps, Vani turned her head to speak.

“Now… now this part… is vital,” she smiled as her body tensed, grunting in pain. “Now you have… to make it better.”
Vani lay sprawled on top of her duvet, face down, twitching slightly, deep aches forcing her breath into ragged gasps. It hurt. She hurt. The pain was strong, but not overwhelming. Now it was reduced, aches, pains, twitches and twinges, more than enough to remind her how rough she’d allowed Tentacles to be. Vani felt it as Tentacles climbed onto the bed, placing verself between her legs. She felt it as a ‘pod probed tentatively at her entrance. She shook her head.

“Not yet… hurts. Make it… better.” Vani turned as she spoke, to better see Tentacles’s reply.

How to make better? Pain cannot be undone.


Tentacles remembers massage. Where does Vani wish massage first?

Vani tried to wave a hand, finding her arm feeling strangely slow and heavy. “My arm; my shoulders. Then… you pick something.”

As a trio of ‘pods began to press into the muscle around the back of her right shoulder, Vani felt her breath slowly returning to normal. It still hurt basically everywhere, but now her shoulder was beginning to relax, knots of tension being carefully worked out. Hyper-smooth skin pressed firmly into her flesh, adding a slick, cooling sensation over the slowly spreading feeling of relaxation. She flexed her shoulder experimentally, finding it only slightly uncomfortable to move.

A single ‘pod coiled a short length around her upper arm, squeezing against her biceps as she flexed her muscles. The tips of more ‘pods pressed into the flesh of her upper arm, working the tension around and out of her body, the coiled ‘pod giving her an almost affectionate squeeze. She could even feel the odd puckering as another pair of ‘pods opened their tip flaps to try and suckle her flesh. She shivered, then grimaced from the wave of pain washing over her. A tentacle pad covered from her shoulder blade to halfway down her tricep, suckers gently pulling at her skin.

She shivered again, cursing. “That’s too much… for now… just… normal massage, okay, no… suckling?”

Tentacles made no reply, but continued to work down her arm, pressing and kneading with ver ‘pods. Vani felt it as another ‘pod wrapped around her wrist, working with the one around her upper arm to gently force her arm to move. Tentacles manipulated her arm slowly, extending it to the limit of what was comfortable before slowly drawing it back in, other ‘pods continuing to work the tension out of her muscles the entire time. The problem was, now that one arm felt so relaxed, the ache throughout the rest of her body seemed almost too sharp of a counterpoint.

“I think that arm’s okay… now,” Vani managed half a smile. “Maybe try moving on?”

Tentacles may choose?

“If you want.”

Vani felt a gentle swipe across her foot and her body spasm in a confusion of delight and agony.
“You know that tickles.”

I know. Tentacles wished to understand if reaction was mitigated by Vani’s pain. It is not.

“Were you experimenting on me?”

Confirmed. Vani seems discomfited by this notion.

“Because it hurts right now. So experiment another time.”

Tentacles apologises.

Vani shook her head. “I shouldn’t snap like that; sorry.”

Tentacles didn’t answer, instead moving ver ‘pods to Vani’s right leg, four of them sliding around and completely covering it. A fifth spread and wrapped around her foot, moving it as the other ‘pods moved her leg. It felt strange, and then Vani realised that it was because those ‘pods were gently pulsing along their length, rippling against her skin. It wasn’t a massage, but it was an interesting—and maybe enjoyable—sensation. She just wasn’t quite sure yet.

Freeing her leg, Tentacles started a more normal massage, and Vani felt like she was beginning to sink into the bed, slowly falling to one side. She reached out slowly, her right hand finding purchase around smooth, banded flesh. A tentacle pad pressed against her forearm from wrist to elbow, each sucker gently latching on. Vani tensed, holding back the shiver she knew was coming. The point of another tentacle pad pressed into the small of her back. Somehow she couldn’t shiver now. Another half smile tugged at the corner of her lips. Neat trick.

So was the next, a not quite so accidental brushing of a ‘pod against her entrance as it wound up around her thigh to deliver a deeper massage. Another ‘pod repeated the trick, just very gently teasing at her opening before pushing into the crease between her thigh and her buttock. The tentacle from the small of her back—at least, she assumed it was the same one—moulded itself around her right cheek and gently squeezed and rolled, clearly experimenting with the more ample supply of her body’s assets back there.

She didn’t complain. Not this time. The ache was fading, and as Tentacles’s ‘pods moved to her other leg, Vani had to admit that she was kind of enjoying being played with like that. It was a while since she’d played with herself—properly, just played. Or had anyone to play with, for that matter. Yuki had always been fun in that regard. Sure, she hadn’t been nearly as sexually driven as Vani, but she liked being played with; worshipped, sometimes. And she had been so petite. Yuki Pettanko, Vani had teasingly called her time and again. Nympho-Vani-ac was the usual reply.

Vani shook her head at the sudden memory, suddenly feeling like something had changed in those few seconds. Nothing new—except Tentacles gently pressing ‘pods against her ribs and left calf. So maybe something gone—the pain, the ache; that was it. Vani let out a contended sigh, slowly rolling over, forcing Tentacles to move and somehow untangle ver ‘pods. The tentacle pressing against her right wrist had managed to stay in place and not get tangled up. It gave her a rippling half-squeeze as the other ‘pods drew back before approaching her leg from different angles.

A trio of ‘pods wound their way around her left arm, pressing down with their tips in a strange sort of rolling motion. One ‘pod looped past her thumb, while the others met beneath her palm. All three pods flexed slowly, manipulating her arm, stretching it out and back, rolling the remaining tension out of her still slightly stiff muscles. Two tentacles placed themselves against her abdomen,
their pads lying from her ribs to just below her breasts. The suckers touched and released in a rippling wave making her squirm.

But it didn’t hurt.

Those suckers rippled again, and with her left hand Vani tried to grab hold, feeling a playful resistance to her movement. Another ripple, and while her body squirmed, Vani shook her head. One last ripple, and the tentacles lifted, pads falling back to cover her breasts.

Does Vani accept this touch?

Lost in the moment, the sensation of dozens of tiny suckers essentially kissing her breasts, it took her a moment to respond. “…hnh… yes. Just be gentle. Less tickling.”

Understanding. Is experimenting allowed?

“I guess…” Vani wasn’t entirely sure what Tentacles was planning to experiment with.

She found out a moment later as those suckers rippled again, then latched on, gently working their way around her breasts. She felt a gentle force lifting her breasts, pulling outwards, then letting them fall back. Enough for a little bounce, even. The tentacle pad lifted from her right breast, and a ‘pod slowly lowered itself toward her nipple, working at the sensitive flesh around there. The ‘pod’s tip flaps opened, and with an odd squelch it began suckling at her nipple. It was so tight, the sensation so close to painful, that Vani gasped in shock. She could feel waves of constriction and release, pulses enveloping her nipple, the sensation washing over her completely.

She hadn’t noticed the tentacle leaving her left breast, but she felt it when another ‘pod began suckling that nipple. It was hard for her to catch a breath, let alone speak. Tentacle suckers held fast and pulled gently at the underside of each breast. Another tentacle rippled its suckers across her stomach, her whole body beginning to writhe. Her arms tensed and spasmed, and she felt her back arch in the throes of pleasure. She hadn’t noticed the building fire in her core, but she felt the release with every fibre of her being, falling back hard against the mattress, feeling like she could melt. She did. Her mind fuzzing over and blanking for a moment as she rode the peak, coming back in time to see two ‘pods hovering and waving in front of her face.

Will Vani accept touch on vagina now?

Vani nodded, forgetting for a moment the need to speak. The question hung in front of her. She let out a contented sigh. “Yes. You can… play some more first, if you want…”

Vani felt it as a ‘pod rested some of its length neatly between her labia, the tip flicking feather-light across the bud of her garden. She almost felt like begging for entry, but that was damped by a part of her mind rarely sated by raw lust. She began to relax, her breathing more even, letting Tentacles’s gentle restraint on her arms pin her in place. Mostly. She squirmed a little to get more comfortable as four ‘pods spiralled and wound their way around each leg, squeezing her thighs and locking her legs in place as they tickled her feet.

Her hands balled into fists, nails digging into her palms. She said nothing, a gentle swirl across her hood stealing the breath from her throat. Her feet and calves had been released, two of those ‘pods now pressing their length into the crease between her thighs and her womanhood. That quiet, secret part of her almost purred in satisfaction. In want. ‘pods began to enfold her, keeping loose, only giving her an occasional squeeze as they wound into place. This… it just felt… right.
With a soft sigh, Vani closed her eyes, waiting, wanting. She lived for a moment in an endless present full of promised sensation. The moment drew on, and she felt a strange explorer teasing open her entrance, exposing her core. Another like it, so slick and smooth and different to any other she’d had feathered and swirled at the bud above her entrance. With a strangely gentle kind of boldness, the first explorer forged onwards, separating her lips, and beginning to slide inside her. Slim, and so very smooth, she tried to grip it, to feel more of it, squeezing those special muscles. But on its own it was simply too small.

Another explorer pressed tentatively at her entrance, feeling a slight resistance to its passage. She gave the other a gentle squeeze, trying to encourage it. The second seemed to flow inside of her, filling her with a feeling of slickness quite unlike anything else. She could feel them flex and open, perhaps to try and touch—or taste—what lay deepest inside of her. And still another played with the bud of her garden, drawing back the hood and drawing forth a great gasp of pleasure. Inside she felt gentle thrusts begin, the owner perhaps not understanding why the motion was necessary. Perhaps she had spoken—but in her current state, she simply could not be sure.

Thrusts deep inside of her, slow and sure, purposeful. Tender. Top and bottom together and alternating. She felt her breathing grow shallow as outside, above her entrance, the other teased the secret bud there without mercy or respite. No malice or pain, merely focused on a single task. Forward and back, in and out, both at once inside of her. Soft thrusts. Gentle flicks. All over she felt the gentle squeeze, a compression like a lover’s embrace, but covering so much more. She felt the cresting peak as that stranger outside pressed insistently against her secret bud, tiny flaps massaging the hood behind. Her whole body tensed.

Arms stretched wide, clawing at whatever they could hold. Her legs writhed in their bondage, and her belly shifted and squirmed. She knew how close she was, and how useless it was to try and fight something this powerful—but still she tried, nails digging into her palms, calves almost cramping again, teeth grinding against each other. One more feathery swirl was all it took, the wave crashing about her so strongly it stilled every movement, every aching muscle. Deep inside she felt herself move, trying to draw forth a seed that wasn’t there. A tiny part of her felt betrayed at this—but the rest saw it as the softer, more gentle kind of touch it should have been.

She had been brought to her fall, and as she lay in abject pleasure, she felt the coils around her sliding away, the pads and their kisses withdrawing to nothing. A loop remained around her ankle, a gentle pressure just enough to know it was there. Her right hand still closed around thickly banded muscle. Even that drew away as her breathing slowed. Her mind drifted in and out, not sure of the barrier between fantasy and flesh. Not caring. A sated sigh escaped her lips as she fell back into the bed. So long she’d waited, and it had been worth it.

So worth it.

She just wished she had the energy to stay awake after that. She wanted to talk to her lover. Give back. But her body and mind so richly drained could not. Would not. So with a ’pod for an anklet, and haphazard tentacles for a comforter, she slept.
Wakefulness came slowly, a haze thick and sweet as honey falling from her memories. Vani smiled, any recall of pain from the night before dulled by what had come after. Twice, even. She continued smiling, slowly opening her eyes. She knew Tentacles would be there, still feeling a single ‘pod draped around her ankle. Blinking a few times to clear her sight, Vani shifted, sitting up, noting the sun outside was well on its way to noon. After last night, I don’t think sleeping in is really that bad.

Vani yawned, covering her mouth with the back of her hand. The ‘pod had fallen from her ankle, and a quiet rustling told her Tentacles had moved around the bed.

Vani’s somnolence extended. I didn’t want to wake you.

“Thanks,” Vani reached down and brushed her fingers across Tentacles’s main body. “I had some nice dreams.”

Tentacles wishes to enquire what are dreams?

Vani considered for a sleepy moment how to explain the concept of moving pictures and images and other sensations to something that couldn’t see at all, and normally didn’t sleep either. Ve might not even know what hallucinations were. She would have to look up a good way to explain it.

“There’s a lot of visual stuff, and I kinda need my breakfast to wake up properly today.” She leant down to kiss Tentacles. “Also, last night… I loved it. I want to do it again, sometime, but… I don’t know what to do for you. It can’t all be about me.”

I would ask to discuss breeding, but that is for a different time. Tentacles is unsure of how to proceed with such exchanges. Perhaps experimentation with physical sensations is required.

“You want me to experiment on you—with you?” Vani swung her legs over the side of the bed, feet pushing into the soft pile of the carpet.

Vani understands, yes. This is what ve desire.

Half masked by another yawn, Vani asked: “After breakfast?”

Can Tentacles have fish and apple?

Standing and stretching, Vani replied. “There’s no fish left, but I’ve still got a few apples. I’ll have to go shopping soon.” Looking over at the dresser she decided it wasn’t worth the effort getting dressed just yet. And the fact her body was still tingling just a little from the stretching and the amazing sex last night.

Tentacles’s ‘pods waved for attention: What is ‘shopping’?

“I buy things like food and drink, cleaning stuff, maybe a science magazine.”

This is exchange of tokens or barter for worth of similar items?
“We use money,” Vani wandered to the stairs. “Maybe you can do some research after breakfast, before we experiment.” A thought struck her. “Or look up dreams; pretty sure there’s better explanations than what I’ve got.”

Tentacles studied dreams on the metal tablet, nipping chunks off one of ver apples. It seemed that dreams, in their basic form, were some kind of visual echo or hallucination, occurring only during nocturnal somnolence. Experts in the understanding of these alien minds had differing—and often conflicting—opinions on what purpose dreams served, if any. To ver own sensibilities it seemed that memory consolidation was the most likely—because beings like Vani had to have some form of process similar to ver own gestalt. The study of dreams was not, however, a major concern. An interesting diversion, but of little concern, as Vani had characterised her dreams as ‘nice’; a word Tentacles understood to mean pleasant or satisfying given differing contexts.

Finishing the apple, ve rolled over to rest next to Vani, extending a single pseudopod to lie against her foot. Not receiving any requests to stop, Tentacles began to coil the pseudopod around Vani’s calf, squeezing gently. Ve felt it as Vani placed a hand on ver main body, stroking it gently down one side.

Tentacles finds feeling of physical connectedness to be filling ver with contented feeling of warmth. Does Vani feel this same warmth?

“Could you repeat the first part?” Vani’s voice held an odd note. “Sorry. I was reading something.”

Repeating the first part of ver query, Tentacles analysed the odd note ve had heard. Shame?

“That warmth is called affection, little buddy,” Tentacles felt it as Vani attempted to tickle ver. Ve couldn’t figure out why it seemed oddly unsuccessful. “And yes, I feel it too. It’s part of forming a relationship—the ‘pair bonding behaviour’, you like to call it.”

Tentacles calls it this because ve did not know a better word. Ve did not know there was a better word.

“I guess there’s still a lot I take for granted.” Ve felt it as Vani rose from the table, moving to the sink. There came the sound of water, in a flow, then random droplets scattering. A different sound, and then Vani walked to the fridge. Tentacles had to admit that ve liked the sound and impact Vani’s feet made as she moved around this particular section of the dwelling. Always clear, solid, and the lower surface had enough stiffness to effectively transfer reverberations from that movement.

“Hey, would you like to try feeding Bossco?”

Tentacles made a cross—the largest negative symbol ve cold think of—with two of ver pseudopods fully extended.

“Okay, I get it,” Vani was laughing. “I’ll do it.”

Tentacles rolled back into the main area of the dwelling, waiting patiently for Vani to return from feeding her dog. Part of ver was still suspicious of the animal. Most of ver mind, however, was consumed with constructing experimental parameters for Vani to test. There were many physical sensations Vani was able to provide. Ve also had to consider that sensations merely physical in nature might have been unable to induce the chemically focused pleasure of true mindsharing. It also seemed that while Vani did have some pheromonal secretions they were instinctive in nature,
not controlled as ver own could be.

Ve felt it as Vani returned, gently lowering herself onto the carpet, legs spread to either side of Tentacles’s main body. Her hands rested low, clasped together between her legs.

“How do you want to start?”

I am unsure. There exists vast range of possible sensation. Multitude of choice has suddenly become overwhelming.

Vani laughed softly. “You don’t know where to start.”

Tentacles finds versef disconcerted by this notion, but yes. Ve does not know with which sensation to begin.

“What if I pick something for you, and we go from there?”

This is acceptable. Vani begins experiment?

Tentacles felt Vani take hold of a pseudopod, wrapping her fingers around it, applying a gentle pressure as evenly as was possible given her anatomy. Her other hand joined in, rhythmically alternating a squeeze and a release. The sensation was mild at best, and too concentrated to induce reactions throughout most of ver mind. Ve wished Vani had more appendages to work with in this experiment. Ve made the negative symbol.

“Not working, huh?”

Confirmed. Sensation too focused on single area, and of low strength.

“You want me to use more force?”

No. Would like to attempt more sensations.

“Here, lay one of your ‘pods out next to me.”

Tentacles did as ve was instructed. A single pressure point indented the tip of the pseudopod next to Vani. Another next to it. Another. Four in total. Then they began to move in sequence, striking softly against ver flesh, sending subtle ripples of sensation down ver pod and also into her echo-sense. The sequenced strikes raced down ver pod, eliciting a strange sensation of movement and contrasting stillness. An interesting effect, but not one ve could yet define as ‘pleasurable’. It almost feels like rain.

Effects of sensation are interesting. Tentacles is unsure if pleasure is created. Tentacles also notes feeling is equivalent to very limited rain effect.

“That’s right…” Vani’s voice trailed off. “You liked the rain; and the shower.”

Sensations of droplet impacts over whole body are enjoyable. We continue experiment?

“Yes, what next?”

Vani experiments with touches she showed Tentacles for masturbation?
Tentacles felt it as Vani’s fingers gently brushed down the side of ver body. Soft touches flowed and swirled and crossed over lingering paths as Vani’s fingers moved with surprising deftness. Attempting to trace the pattern—if there was one—proved a waste of effort, but somehow the mystery of those paths seemed to enhance how enjoyable this touch was. Definitely one to use and refine in future.

Sensation is enjoyable. Frustration of pattern predicting also elicits mental enjoyment. Tentacles would like to know about why Vani wishes ver to experience ‘pleasure’ via limited physical contacts.

“Because I can’t mindshare,” Vani’s voice was soft. “And for now this ‘limited physical contact’ is all I can offer you.”

Understanding begins, context of Vani’s earlier statement: It can’t be all about me. Implication is Vani wishes to reciprocate pleasure giving as act of building relationship, yes?

Tentacles felt it as Vani shifted and leaned heavily against ver main body. Vani’s arms wrapped around ver, linking on the opposite side, while Vani’s breasts pressed softly against ver skin, both surfaces deforming slightly under the force applied. A moment later and Vani had moved back into her resting posture, waiting to continue.

Tentacles wishes to enquire about previous contact.

“It’s called a hug—kinda hard to do, given you’re a weird shape and all, but that’s alright. People do it to show affection, or understanding. Some people do it as a greeting.”

Contact was strange. Ve was not expecting it. I cannot define it.

“Would you like me to hug you again?”

Yes.

Ve felt more keenly for the sensations this time, observing ver mind-state as well. Where Vani’s arms contacted ver body, ve felt warm—likely an effect of Vani’s metabolism. Ve also felt a slight roughness from very fine hairs, almost like the sensory cilia certain species possessed. As more of Vani’s body pressed into ver, ve felt a tiny pulse of the warmth Vani had described as affection, and found verself with a sudden urge to enfold Vani in the touch of comfort. An instant later ve realised that this ‘hug’ was likely the human equivalent of the touch of comfort, allowing as it did as much direct contact as was possible between two strange bipedal beings.

The hug was not finished, and now Tentacles felt Vani lay her head gently against the top of ver body, hair trailing between them. Vani’s hair created an interesting sensation of soft and imperfect contact, and just as ve was starting to define that, Vani gently kissed the top of ver body and lifted her head away. The hug continued. Ve found more and more that this sensation was enjoyable—and that the soft warmth of affection continued as long as contact remained. It was not to the heights of what Vani wished to give in terms of pleasure, but it was still very much enjoyable.

I like hug. It does not give pleasure, but feeling of warmth/affection is enjoyable on its own.

“Okay then, little one, what next?”

Vani wishes to create state of peak physical pleasure in Tentacles, yes?
“That’s the idea. Hopefully.”

Tentacles shifted ver main body slightly, carefully releasing ver ovipositor. The looped fibres of the floor were almost rough against the more sensitive skin. With a pair of pseudopods ve gently took hold of Vani’s wrists.

Vani may experiment with careful touch on ovipositor. You remember information from anatomy lesson?

“It’s sensitive, and prehensile, so I need to be gentle,” Vani shuffled closer as she spoke, moving her arms slowly against the slight restraint. “Or perhaps you could show me how it is you would like to be touched?”

It took Tentacles a moment to parse the question, and then ve signed an affirmative. Experimenting together would be far more instructional. But ve was still unsure ve could reach the level of physical pleasure experienced by Vani the previous night. Anatomical—and neurological—structures were simply so different that ve could not predict the outcome of the experiment, though ve would admit disappointment if ver concerns proved true.

Setting those thoughts aside, Tentacles spread two additional pseudopods around each of Vani’s hands, thinning them as far as was possible to allow Vani the greatest sensation of what she was touching. Ve began with movements that would be familiar to her; strokes, swirls, tracing. Ve was even daring enough to attempt a very gentle pinch. Then, to be sure Vani understood ver limits, ve pressed almost painfully hard into the less sensitive root of ver ovipositor, making verself flinch slightly.

“I’m sorry, did I hurt you?” Concern was evident in Vani’s voice.

Action was deliberate. Vani may only use lighter force when her hands are released.

Understanding.

“I understand.”

A sudden lack of envelopment brought Vani’s senses back to her hands, the mid-morning air pleasantly cool. She had to admit to being surprised that she hadn’t caused any major reactions thus far—and that the action that elicited the strongest response had been a simple hug. It was just proving more and more how truly alien Tentacles was, along with ver unique biology. But there were almost human traits as well; ver curiosity about the world; ver desire to experiment; how much ve was willing to trust Vani. Just like the trust she had shown allowing Tentacles to ‘see’ all of her by touch.

With her own touch, Vani traced a single finger from root to tip of Tentacles’s ovipositor, noting how much rougher the skin felt. It wasn’t a pattern, or harsh, or sharp, but it was rougher than wrinkles should be, and yet strangely flexible. Two fingers idly tracing around the circumference, Vani leaned in for a closer a look. She could also feel that somehow, in some way, it was smoother tracing in some directions than others. She placed her entire hand against Tentacles’s ovipositor, moving first one way, then another. It was a strangely familiar feeling. So familiar in fact the she almost couldn’t place it.

Fur.

Something on Tentacles’s ovipositor had a nap, just like Bossco’s fur.
Leaning in even closer, her hair falling across Tentacles’s ovipositor as she almost lay her cheek against it, she could finally see what it was. Tiny, rounded, fleshy barbs. They grew in patches, leading to the chaotic nap she’d felt in places. There was another place she’d seen shapes like that—because she was a sucker for articles about big cats. It looked like a tiger’s tongue. Except in a weird dark green-grey colour. Then she saw some ‘pods waving for attention.

Vani continues thermal gradient stimulation?

She blinked, sitting up straight, trying to figure it out. Then she realized how close she’d been. Close enough to share body heat. Close enough for her breath to skate across those flesh barbs. Papillae. That was what the tiger tongue things were called. It would serve as a description unless Tentacles had something better. She leaned down again, exhaling against a short length of Tentacles’s ovipositor.

“Like this?”

Yes. Is very enjoyable. Which mechanism does Vani use to create micro-pressure thermal gradients?

“It’s just my breath, see,” And after taking a deep breath Vani blew gently along the length of Tentacles’s ovipositor.

Vani’s breath has interesting stimulating characteristics. Breathe along other surfaces please?

Vani did as she was asked, wondering just what Tentacles was trying to figure out. She leaned close over a mass of ‘pods, her breath skating around and between them. She picked up a tentacle and exhaled hard into the forest of suckers. She shifted slightly so her breath could play in a line across the top of Tentacles’s main body, then she moved again and blew against the nap of some of the papillae. Tentacles seemed to twitch ever so slightly at the change.

Vani continues this breath against ovipositor?

With a smile Vani shifted into a low crouch, moving her head so she could trace patterns with her breath. Skating up and down, and making little swirls. Exhaling soft and close, or blowing hard from far away. Every now and then Tentacles would twitch, or give a minute shiver. It seemed clear that ve was enjoying the play. It was also becoming clear that the build up, or whatever it was, was not going to lead to some kind of alien orgasm. Even she added her hands into the equation—Tentacles didn’t protest—Vani couldn’t sense any changes in the creature before her.

The play between them continued for a while, but the results of the experiment were obvious before Tentacles called a halt to them.

Tentacles finds verself unable to experience peaks of pleasure that Vani seeks during sex. Ve finds that ve is disappointed in this outcome, but cannot understand fully why this should be so.

“It’s okay,” Vani sighed softly, leaning back into Tentacles’s body. “I guess we really are alien to each other, more than I think.”

This is stated fact. Physiological and neurological divergence is extreme, but not insurmountable. Understanding of this trait is full, but disappointment still exists.

“Here,” Vani turned and wrapped Tentacles in a tight hug. “We can work it out together.”
Together.

Tentacles had to admit ve liked the sound of that. Together.
In her workshop—once again wearing too many clothes for her liking—Vani was putting more work into the scrap dragon she was building. The wings needed some solid mounting points, and to that end she was constructing a Y-brace in the belly of the beast, welding it to the heavy steel frame that ran through the dragon’s legs. Of course, if the dragon were to have its wings folded, like in her original design, then she could just weld the braces in and have the wings integral to the structure.

Her client, of course, wanted it to look like the dragon was about to take flight, wings outstretched—which would mean some serious transport problems if the wings weren’t detachable. It also meant she would likely have to supervise the install, almost halfway across the country. That, however, was a problem for another day. Today’s major problem was sorting out the internal bracing. The problem she was trying not to think about too much was that Tentacles didn’t seem to be able to orgasm—or whatever ve might call it—from physical stimulation alone.

It was actually quite a puzzle, but one they’d agreed on trying to figure out together. From what she knew about biology, Vani understood it as being something like an electrical signal overload that triggered a lot of other things. Things from the autonomous nervous system. And though she knew ve could feel things, Vani had to wonder if Tentacles had nerves at all. After all, Tentacles had shown her magic, and had literally come from another dimension. That, perhaps, was the root of the problem.

But she wasn’t about to ask Tentacles if she could dissect one of ver ‘pods, even if ve could regenerate. It was also the fact she hadn’t done too well with the whole frog dissecting thing in high-school either. All of that seemed especially weird given that she didn’t mind the occasional painful scratch or cut on herself. She scratched softly at the scar under her left breast. Stabbed in the lung by a piece of loose rebar had been just above what she could handle. That was before factoring in how terrified she’d been. Shaking her head, Vani turned off the welder and crawled out of the dragon.

She could work through it, almost every time. Almost. But this time she could feel it, pinning her to the seat, making her breath wheeze in the most terrible way. The taste of blood in the back of her throat. The slightly used looking mask they’d put on her while they cut through the rebar just in front of her chest. Even the scream of the grinder, and the stupidly petty thought that it was going to ruin her dress with the sparks. She couldn’t remember what they’d said, but she remembered the compassion and reassurance in their voices. She also remembered thinking that one of them was too young—and way too attractive—to be an EMT. Or was it a firefighter?

Vani blinked, shaking her head. She hadn’t told many people, but for a few months after she’d been seeing a shrink. There was a recurring nightmare, and then it happened when she heard a weird clang in the workshop at uni. A flashback—and a lot more intense than the one she’d just had. So she’d done some research. Looked into things for PTSD—which was still way too weird to her, given that this wasn’t a firefight, or losing a comrade, or some sort of mugging. It was just something that had happened. It was only during a counselling session that she learned it didn’t have to be caused by a person. PTSD was related to a traumatic event—and if being terrified of dying while impaled on a piece of rebar didn’t count as a traumatic event, she didn’t know what would. Vani smiled. Those had been the almost exact words of her counsellor.

Looking up at the dragon, Vani sighed. “You know, I’m not sure I’ll be able to get any more work done on you today.” She looked at her watch. “Well, it wasn’t long until lunch anyway.”
Bossco was waiting at the door, like always. And just like always he was jumping up exuberantly, trying to lick her face.

“Down.” He didn’t stop. Vani put a hand on his shoulders, forcing him down. “I said ‘down’.”

Bossco trotted at her side as she walked back to the house. He kept pressing his head against her leg, obviously angling for some ear scratches. Vani obliged. The wagging of Bosco’s tail helped lighten her mood. She sat on the middle step to take off her boots. Bosco rested his muzzle on her shoulder, sniffing her ear. He licked it.

“Eww…” Vani pushed him aside as he tried it again. “Enough.”

Only after she was inside did it occur to her that he’d just been trying to help. ‘Help’, in his own inimitably inept fashion, but he was only a dog, after all. Not the best with reassuring conversations.

Rummaging through the cupboards in the kitchen, Vani was having trouble deciding what to make for lunch. There were still eggs, and plenty of bread. Soft-boiled, with ‘little soldiers’. She also wondered how Tentacles would handle food like that. Putting a pot of water on the stove to heat up, Vani went to find Tentacles, currently spread out behind a couch, ‘pods moving in strange patterns and limned with a subtle orange that didn’t quite glow.

For ve own part, Tentacles was concentrating on the progress of ve uniplanar integration. It was complete enough now that ve could safely accelerate the final stage with a touch of eldritch physics. It was considerably easier given that this planar realm was a constrained 4/11 on dimensionality, with only three of those dimensions—in total—being temporal. It was something the residents of this planet, at least, had yet to completely grasp. Far, far easier than the blossomed 6/17 ve had passed through prior to arriving in this planar reality.

Tentacles felt it as Vani paused near the reach of ver tentacles. Tentacles shifted part of ve consciousness back towards the physical plane, using a pair of pseudopods to indicate ve was now listening.

“Would you like some eggs for lunch?”

Tentacles was so shocked ve nearly created a second rift in the locus. Moving very slowly and deliberately, ve disentangled the physics, leaving the process to continue on its own. To consume an egg—on its own, external to that which bred from it—was an act that had alarming implications. Tentacles could only remember a handful of times ve had consumed an egg, and the required sacrifices and ceremony around such an important act. For Vani to suggest it with such casual nature was more than culture shock.

There was a deep sense of revulsion at the suggestion, and also vague notions that perhaps Vani was no longer an ideal specimen for breeding. But there remained other evidence, such as the fact Vani asserted that humans gave birth to live young, and that many creatures on the planet seemed to consume eggs of other species as a matter of course. Ve had to make sure this was the case.

Egg for consumption, what level of animal creates it?

“Uhh…” Vani seemed confused by the question. “I don’t know what level. It’s from a chicken, a kind of bird we use for meat.”
Chicken is not sapient?

“Pretty sure. They just wander round, eating grain off the ground, pecking things, and laying eggs.”

Ceremony is not required for egg consumption.

“Wait…” Vani’s voice held a note of confusion mixed with realization. “Are you trying to tell me you eat your own eggs as some sort of religious thing?”

It was always special ceremony, and the egg for consumption was delivered without coding of fertility within. Egg instead contained memories that ve who delivered wished to no longer keep or suffer. Ve who delivered egg never ate of it, but required to reinforce mind of individuals that did consume egg contents. Memories from within that could not be consumed were diluted and washed away with currents of water. Deliverer of egg remained bound to egg location until dissipation complete. All individuals then created temporal construct to remove physicality of egg and disperse into adjacent planar realms.

“I think I get it,” Vani’s voice was soft, and at some point during the explanation she had sat down, cross legged. “Somehow you could put every copy of a bad memory into an egg, and when you laid it, others of your kind would ‘taste’ it, to see if it was too valuable to forget. Does that seem right so far?”

Vani understands basic concept well.

“So, whoever laid the egg—the one that wanted to forget—had to help the others somehow if they chose to absorb those memories?” Tentacles felt it as Vani placed a hand against a nearby pseudopod. “And if no one wanted those memories, then whoever laid it had to wait until they were all gone, and then everyone nearby helped spread whatever was left spread so far apart it could never be re-absorbed.”

In simplistic understanding of event, this is true. Significance for deliverer of egg is higher. Egg is special, memory should not be removed, but ceremony allows for this function, and transfer of memory if importance remains despite mental conception of deliverer of egg.

“So it’s like a holy ritual or something?”

If holy implies high significance to core individual, yes.

“Okay, I think understand.” There was a lengthy pause. “So, aside from eggs, are there any other foods that might be taboo?”

Consumption of own species is considered abhorrent act, even in desperation or mental damage.

“Cannibalism. I don’t think we’ll have any problems with that. People just don’t eat each other—and Bossco knows better than to try and eat you now anyway.”

Tentacles is willing to consume egg of chicken, if Vani guarantees no memory within, and no coding of fertility.

“I’m not 100% on how chemical memory works, but I’m pretty sure chickens wouldn’t use it that way, and if the eggs were fertile they wouldn’t be worth eating.”
Vani stood, awkwardly reminded of how many layers her work forced her to wear. She unzipped the front of her overalls and tied the sleeves around her waist. The lid of the pot had been rattling for a little while, but she’d been captivated by Tentacles’s explanation of how its kind forgot things. Still, time was wearing on, and she was getting hungry. One egg each, and some toast as well. A light lunch. The problem, of course, was the toast cooking faster than the eggs. Even after so many years she hadn’t quite got the timing right. The toast popped up nearly two minutes before the eggs were ready.

It didn’t take long to spread some butter on the toast, then slice it into strips. She called out to Tentacles, grabbing a pair of egg cups from the cupboard as she did so. She took the eggs out of the pot, then sliced the tops off them before sitting them in the egg cups. She dipped one of her ‘little soldiers’ in the egg, enjoying the gooey mess it ended up as. She handed the other egg to Tentacles, along with the strips of bread. Only after hearing a couple of odd crunches did she realise she needed to explain the concept of ‘little soldiers’ to Tentacles.

“No, no,” Vani held a ‘pod’ in her hand. “You dip the bread in the egg, like this.” She suited action to words. “Then you eat it. And dip it in again, if there’s any left. Then get another ‘little soldier’. Yeah. Like that.”

What purpose does ritual of coating ‘soldier’ in egg yolk have?

“It’s not a ritual. You just do it so you can eat the yolk without having to use a spoon.”

Tentacles could eat entire egg without spoon. ‘Little soldiers’ seems to add unnecessary process to eating.

“For you, I guess,” Vani smiled. “I don’t have a beak for cracking shells, or a heat resistant tongue.”

Point is understood.

Vani let her mind drift back to what Tentacles had said about placing memories into those special eggs, and the first attempt she had made at chemical communication with her. An attempt that had left her feeling weird and slightly fuzzy, unsure if she’d been influenced by some kind of drug. But the weirdness had had structure, almost giving her a hint of flavour, of being… something. Something else. It was, she considered, something she would be willing to attempt again. Provided it didn’t end up poisoning her—but she was fairly sure Tentacles would be able to avoid that, having studied a fair amount of chemistry before attempting to make her up some analgesic substances.

Chewing on another ‘little soldier’, Vani found herself shuffling closer to Tentacles. “There’s something else I want to ask you.”

Vani has question of importance?

“Yeah. About chemical memories… how do they actually work?”

Can Vani define work; topic of chemical memory is complex and multi-faceted. Narrowing field for explanation will help answering of Vani’s question.

“Umm…” Vani tried to think of how to phrase what she’d experienced last time. “Is it possible for a non-chemical memory using person to understand them?”
Possibility exists that person could absorb fractional gestalt from memory, or identify compounds, but full deciphering and understanding of memory is not possible.

“So the first time you tried to give me a chemical memory, and I felt weird—that’s about all I’d get?”

This has similarity to gestalt. Vani please explains feeling weird?

“It felt like I didn’t have enough arms,” Vani tried to recall more detail. “My body felt wrong. And I think there was flash of silver, or maybe the taste of fish. I can’t remember it exactly.”

That is gestalt. Vani tasted form of Tentacles for a moment, and feeling of satisfaction.

“So the gestalt is like… an overall feeling?”

It is sensation of being. One of many parts, above, but also within. Concept has difficulty of explanation. Gestalt is more than biology.

“Hmm…” A thought had just occurred to Vani. “Could you create a memory that was only gestalt?”

I could. Does Vani wish for Tentacles to do this?

“Yes.” Vani took a deep breath. “I’m just not sure what it will do to me.”

Compounds for chemical memory are non-toxic, and seemingly digestible for Vani. Tentacles understands feeling of risk; possibility of unsureness about influence?

“I think if you really wanted to, you would have by now. And you also know that if you did now, I wouldn’t trust you again.”

Vani has correct conclusion. I will begin, process is simple.

It didn’t take long, Tentacles preparing a memory—or not-memory—that looked like pale green slime in the bottom of a shot glass. Vani stared at it dubiously. “That’s it?”

It is gestalt-only memory. Substance is slight.

Vani drained the glass, and felt her eyes glaze over. The world was black, and blurry. She could feel herself trying to branch her arms and legs out into the proper manifold configuration. Her mass was wrong, and her shape unstable. Then the world swam back into focus, sitting on the floor next to Tentacles, still wearing her working overalls. The feeling from the gestalt had been surprisingly strong. Except it wasn’t even really a feeling.

Is Vani okay?

Vani reached out and stroked Tentacles’s body. “I’m okay. That gestalt… I think I felt—or saw—or something—like you for a few seconds. I wanted to spread my arms and legs out into lots of ‘pods. And I felt like my body was all wrong.”

That was my gestalt. The framework for being Tentacles.

“So a gestalt is like—“ Vani searched her mind for the right words, but only found a loose allusion
"—like an OS for your mind?"

Possibly. Vani defines ‘OS’

“Operating System. It’s the basic level of programming that a computer—like my laptop—runs on.”

Then yes. Gestalt is like OS for Tentacles’s mind, but more complex. Gestalt is special word. Also means overall feeling of memory; or collection of memories that creates Tentacles. All are types of gestalt. Vani has experienced second kind. Without encapsulated memory experience is re-encoded as blankness and instinct. Would Vani consent to experiments at later time?

“Later.” Vani found herself agreeing. “But we talk about it, what you’re trying to do, what I should expect, and so on—before we start experiments.”

Conditional requirements understood. Later experiments. Now we eat more chicken egg?

Vani smiled. “Sure, just give me a little while to cook some more.”
Vani lay in bed, relaxing, doing nothing other than let her hands roam across her body. Occasionally they would roam across Tentacles’s body. Occasionally a ‘pod would roam across hers. She was still mulling over the fact Tentacles was unable to experience whatever ver equivalent of orgasm was through physical stimulation alone. She was also considering the impact that just the gestalt had had on her—and whether or not going deeper down that rabbit hole was enjoyable, terrifying, or just plain weird. But Tentacles had talked about chemical memories as being the norm for ver species, and a way for newly born—or hatched, or whatever—offspring to immediately be able to face the challenges of the world.

It also led her to thinking about mindsharing. A connection Tentacles had said involved every ‘pod from both parties, with both sharing and receiving chemical memories. Vani had to wonder if memories weren’t the only chemicals being shared. Though, if so, Tentacles should have said something about it—ve certainly knew enough about ver own biology.

“Tentacles?”

Yes Vani?

“You remember how we played with physical stimulation this morning?”

Ve remember mutual frustration at negative outcome from experiments.

“I know,” Vani sighed softly, playfully batting away a ‘pod near her thigh. “But I was thinking about how you spoke of mindsharing working both ways. Chemical memories.”

Feeling is possibly considered equivalent, but description is difficult. Tentacles understands only basic mechanics of orgasm. Vani understands only basic mechanics of mindsharing. Experiential mismatch in data sets means direct comparisons remain impossible.

“More specifically,” Vani pressed on, teasing a ‘pod that was stroking around her breast. “I was wondering if the state from mindsharing was chemically induced—by more than just memories, possibly.”

Vani has excellent insight into this biological discipline. Many academics postulated this as reason for mindsharing continuing, despite lack of biological necessity. Many mindsharing dyads, triads and larger groupings contributed to experiments. Evidence remained anecdotal. Alternative hypotheses existed in many forms. Most common was that gestalt reorganisation triggered by mindshared memories caused chemosynthetic disruption. For species continuation, biology came to treat this disruptive range as pleasant.

Frowning slightly, Vani tried to think of a decent parallel. “So it got you guys high?”

Physical elevation from partners was irrelevant. Why does Vani ask this?

“Sorry,” Vani shook her. “I mean it was like being drugged—“ and then Vani realised that was another thing they had not discussed in depth “—like drinking influence chemicals for pleasantness.”

Postulation is not entirely inaccurate. Influence chemicals had been considered possible cause, but
no traces remained after mindsharing.

“What about during?”

Emission of influence chemicals was noted in very few observations. Observers remained unsure of purpose, for initiation of mindsharing, pseudopodal guidance, or perhaps reflexively due to prior acts. Possibility also of dilute traces from other activity in area.

“Okay, maybe we’re getting off track here.”

Tentacles reminds Vani that she began digression with new line of questioning.

“Maybe I should start another one.” Vani underscored her words with a kiss to each of the ‘pods she was currently holding hostage.

Discussion is for increase of pair bonding rapport?

“Yeah,” Vani let one of the ‘pods go, tracing around Tentacles’s body with two idle fingers. “I wanted to ask what your home was like. I mean, it’s easy enough to imagine another dimension like Earth, with stars and planets and stuff, but yours was probably completely alien. I wanna know if I can understand it.”

Plane from which Tentacles comes was aquatic void. Liquid filled all space, but liquid was not water—we are not sure Vani’s plane has chemical equivalent substance to ocean between stars. Vani may question existence of stars within great ocean, but planar space manifold contained five dimensions, meaning orbital paths became unstable. Pressure of liquid medium was mitigated by radiation and ejecta output of extant stars. If liquid fell inwards, path led to escape or collapse, no orbits. Tentacles is not sure ve can explain sufficiently without use of highest order physics and invocation of infinites.

Vani shook her head. “Yeah, I wouldn’t get it anyway. So, your home was basically all water—and had stars that pushed the liquid away?”

In essence of simplicity, correct. Culture could expand and exploit entire universe. Vani could feel great pulse when stars would die, gravitic wave propagating through liquid as bubble does in water. Explosion-collapse of star launches chemical ejecta into liquid, creates currents, combines elements eventually. Evolution takes untold time. Eventually Tentacles’s people spawn. We study planar reality. Understand pulses. Touch stars. In dead stars we find gates beyond.

“Wait, how did you touch stars without getting incinerated?”

Bodies native to plane supported vastly different composition. Stars could not harm except by crushing during starquakes. Continuing: Gates beyond are forbidden when explorers do not return. Technology is developed. Magic is realised through dimensional potentials. Spread is accelerated by mindsharing. Magic and technology required by first successful explorers. Returners mindshare experiences beyond. Understanding dawns across culture. Tentacles’s culture then remakes self. Suits bodies to travel through planar realities with physical manifolds unsuitable for normal dimensional existence. Magic becomes ingrained. Gestalt becomes disconnected from physicality, then returns remotely. Link is strengthened through technology, then magic. Mind may exist for moments outside of form, during interplanar travel, or during existence in hyper-manifold planes.

“And you guys did all this without even being able to see?”
Echo-sense provides at-range perception of locations. Entire realm filled with liquid. Vani is understanding now?

“Sorry, I’m still trying to wrap my head around this whole thing,” Vani rubbed her chin. “And then somehow you took your minds out of your bodies, and put them back differently. There’s so much I don’t understand.”

Explanation difficult. Requires concept-words for which Vani’s culture lacks even most basic precepts. Cannot create new combination-words to explain. Even use of term ‘gates beyond’ and ‘magic’ highly inaccurate to actuality of concepts discussed. Confusion was always possible. Likely. Tentacles tries to simplify to understandable level, but may not have capability with given vocabulary and knowledge of this plane’s physics.

Vani sighed, throwing herself back against the pillows. “I’ll just have to try and keep up then, and hope my head doesn’t explode.”

There is possibility of dangerous cranial event due to knowledge acquisition?

“No, no,” Vani laughed, feeling some of the weird tension suddenly draining from her. “It’s just something we say when we think information might be overwhelming. Like this stuff.” She waved a hand in the air. “Just go on, please. I am interested even if I can’t understand more than half of it.”

Continuing: Culture expands to several planes via gates beyond. Magic used to open pathways to planar matrix not requiring gates beyond for functionality. First limited branes discovered—travel restricted to unidirectional path. Much time passes, consolidation phase of culture begins. Physical existence now possible in dimensionality from three to twenty-one. Returners from limited branes begin mass mindsharing experience. Branes are result of sapience. Sapient cultures infiltrated, dominated, or uplifted as necessary to dissolve limitation on branes. Culture expands to empire. Planar matrix evolves like fractal branching. Explorers become curious about expansion narrowing in depths of matrix.

“So, like a giant tree, with branches?”

Vani is more insightful than she thinks in this matter. Tentacles also decides matrix narrowing is curious. Ve is bored with conquest. Subterfuge provides excellent intellectual challenges, and allows study of planar matrix from ‘below’. Limited brane was selected—but no sapience discovered beyond. Event was not unprecedented. Lack of returning gates beyond was. Planar realm was six dimensional, dead, uniform heat distribution. Tentacles realised ve had discovered heat-death universe. Sapience existed, but no longer possible. This was ‘hard’ barrier at depth of planar matrix. Frustration beyond comprehension that ve could not communicate this.

“Oh… I…” Vani didn’t have words to describe the great pang of sorrow she felt for ver companion.

Tentacles dove deeper into planar matrix, well beyond planned depths. Gates beyond to higher matrix non-existent. Ve continued exploration, searching depths for possible sapience. Gates beyond themselves becoming rare. Time blurred with space as Tentacles explored depths of planar matrix. Increase of limited branes without sapience beyond. Second heat-death plane discovered, but not behind limited brane. Ve created matrix beacons to warn of dangers. Then ve discovered limited brane near bottom of matrix. Ve found verself in dimension with planets. Gravity. Atmosphere. Emergence point could not have been accidental.
“Earth?”

Yes, Earth. Magic seeks centres of sapience in the plane beyond. Accuracy is low, but distance is relative to sapience distribution in realm. I fell, through the sky. I waited, into the night. I was chewed on by a monster with teeth and bones. I found sapience restraining that beast. I found you. I found Vani.

Tentacles found verself suddenly supporting Vani’s weight as she wrapped her arms and legs around ver body, lying her head against it as in the hug earlier. But this time Vani did not move. Her breath rippled across Tentacles’s body, causing ver to shiver. Making ver wonder why ve could feel tiny drips of liquid, and those drips leaving tracks down the side of ver body. Ve could also feel a strange, rhythmic shuddering of Vani’s body against ver own. Arms grew tight around ver upper surface. Ve felt a gentle kiss where the drips had fallen.

Vani seemed reluctant to leave the hug, so ve began slowly enfolding her legs and torso in the touch of comfort. She sat back slightly, then leaned in close again, leaving one arm around ver body.

“How long…” Vani’s voice had acquired a breathy quality that Tentacles had not heard before. “How long were you alone?”

Ve do not know. Time can also exist multi-dimensionally. Tentacles cannot measure it in words meaningful to Vani. Ve could say deep. Or long. Ve could sometimes sense another nearby, passing adjacent planes. Matrix roots too distantly separated to allow communication.

“That’s… that’s…”

Tentacles felt the tiny droplets again, falling against a pseudopod. Ve lifted one to Vani’s face. Is Vani leaking?

Vani laughed, her voice keeping the same breathy quality. “Tears. when people get sad, they cry.” Why is Vani sad?

“Because she imagined living alone, trapped in another world for eternity.”

Vani was trying to understand Tentacles’s mind state? To make… better?

“Yes.”

There is word for this?

“Compassion,” Vani sniffed.

Tentacles likes compassion. It is good word.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!